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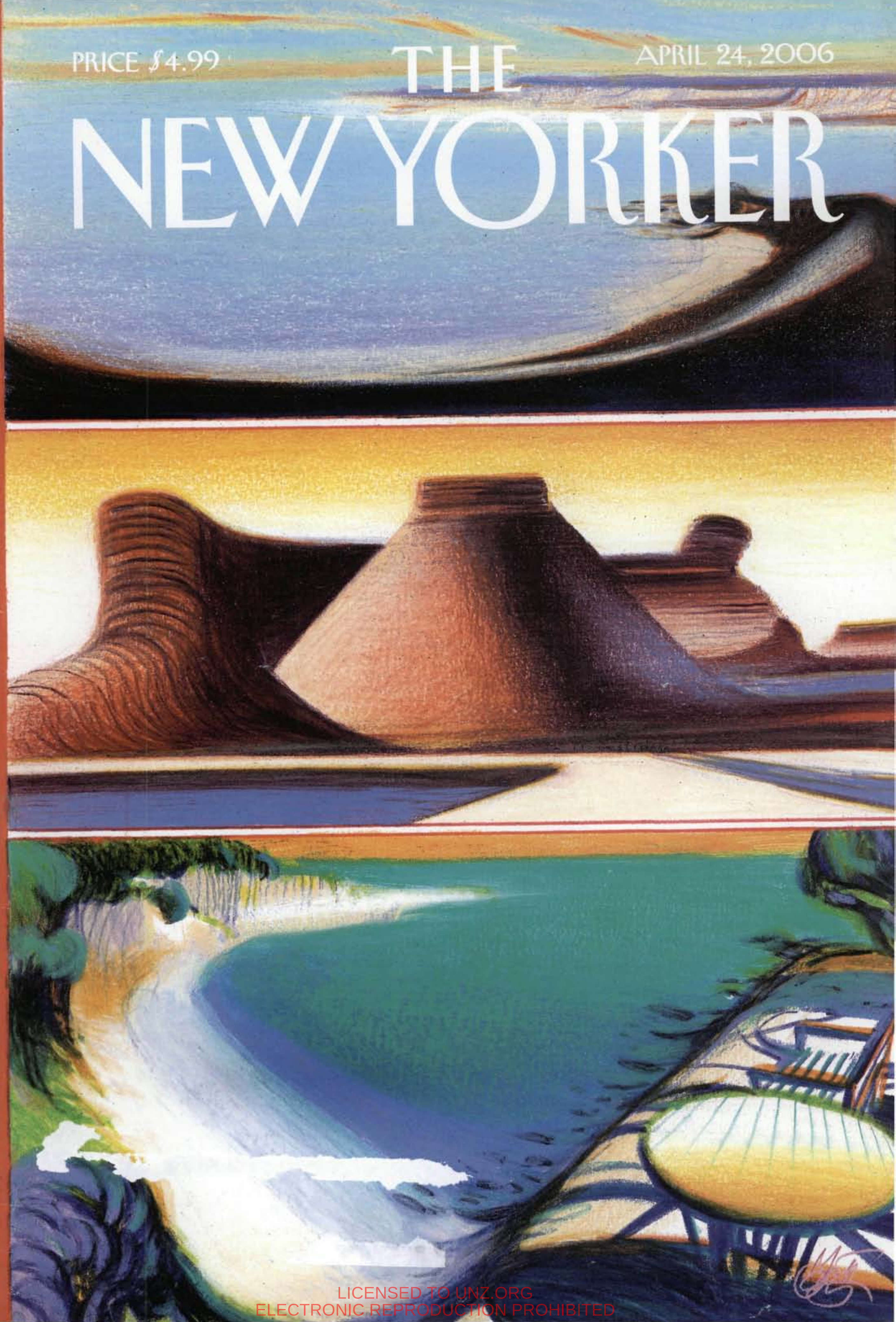
# THE NEW YORKER

APRIL 24, 2006



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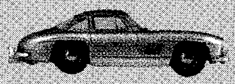

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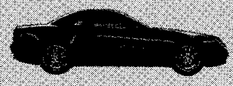

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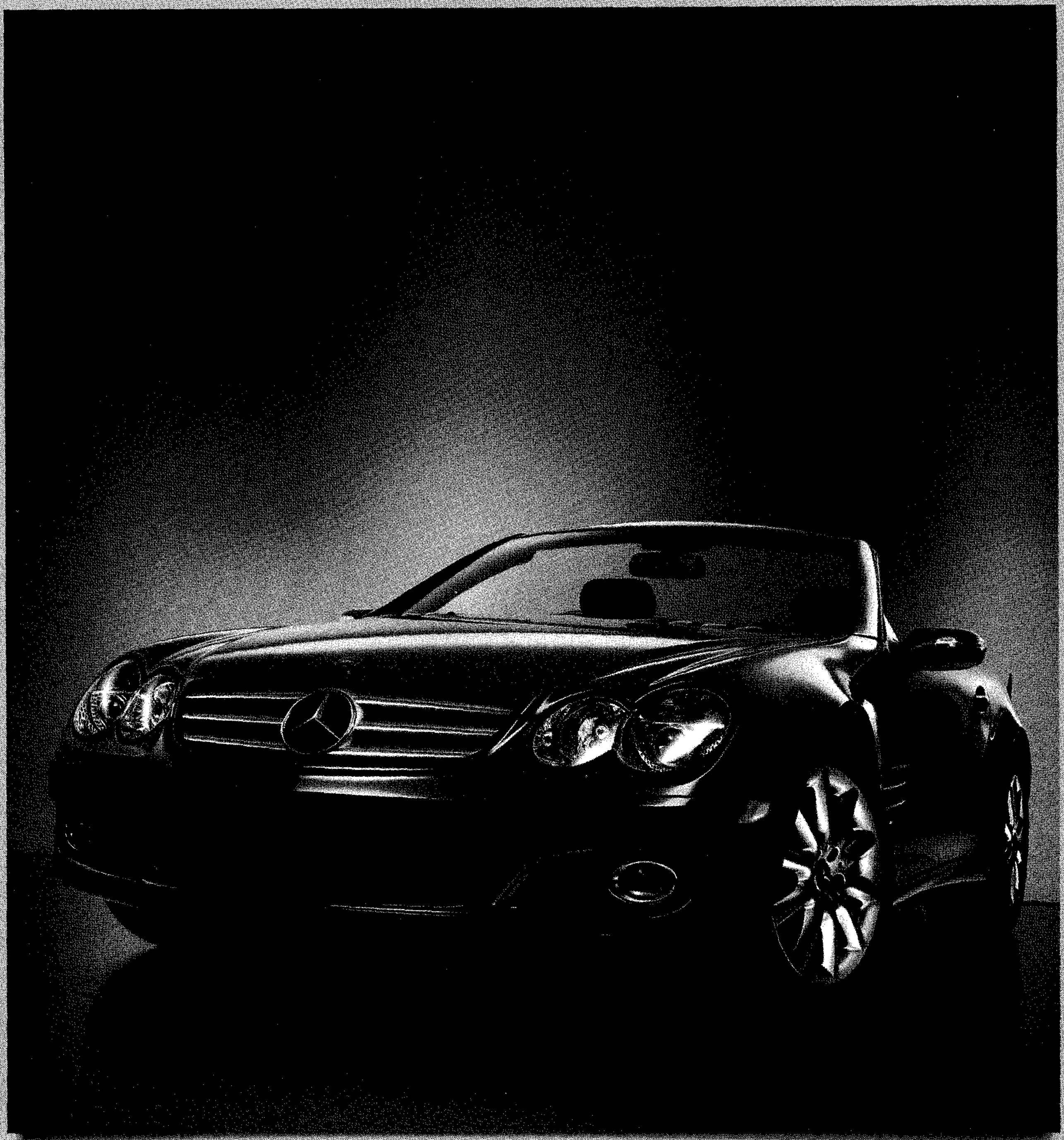

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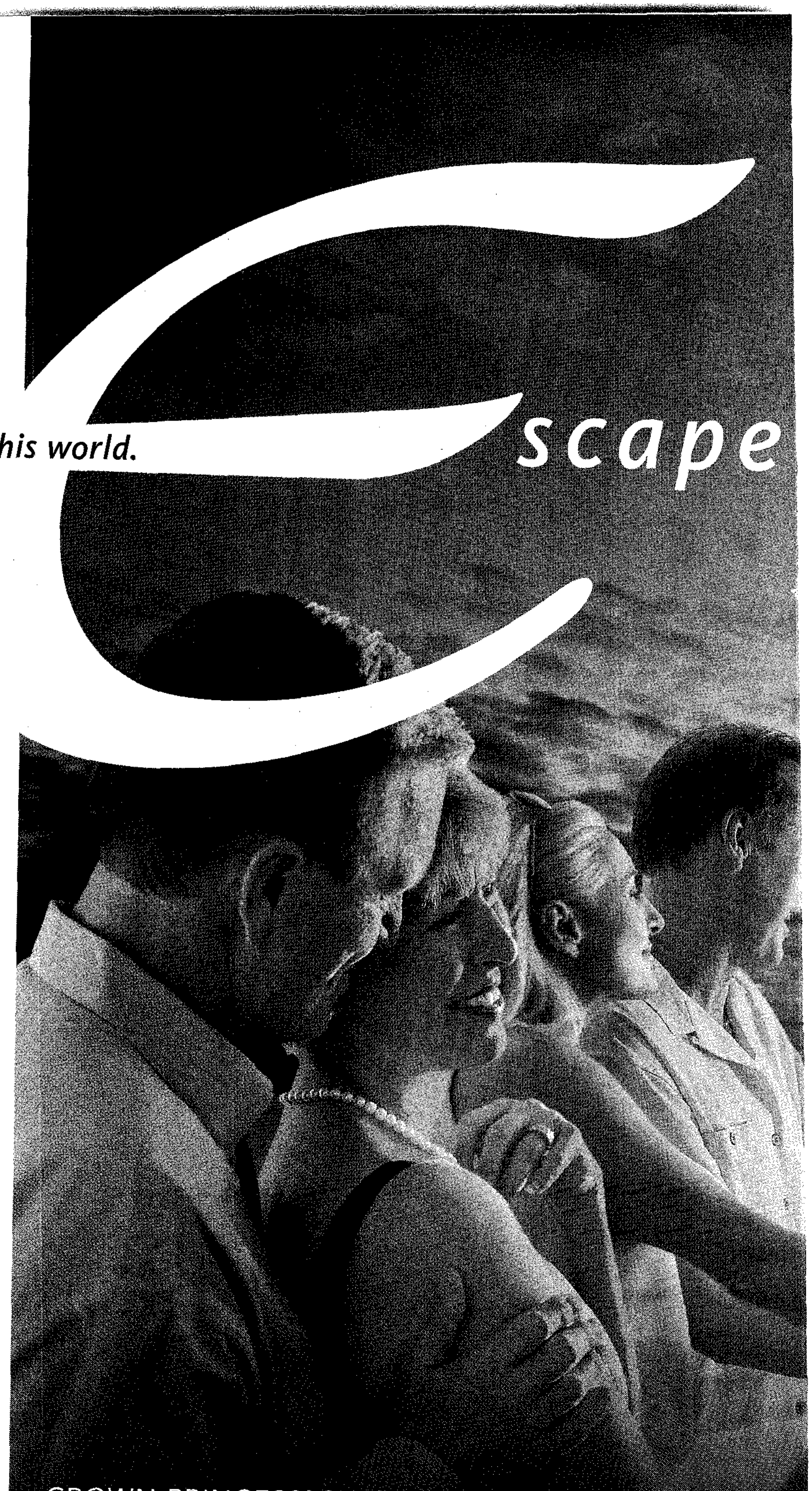

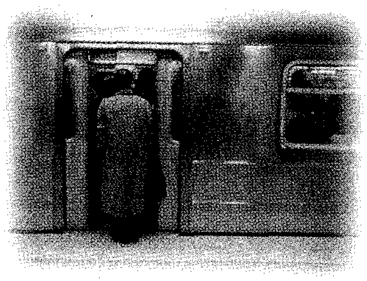

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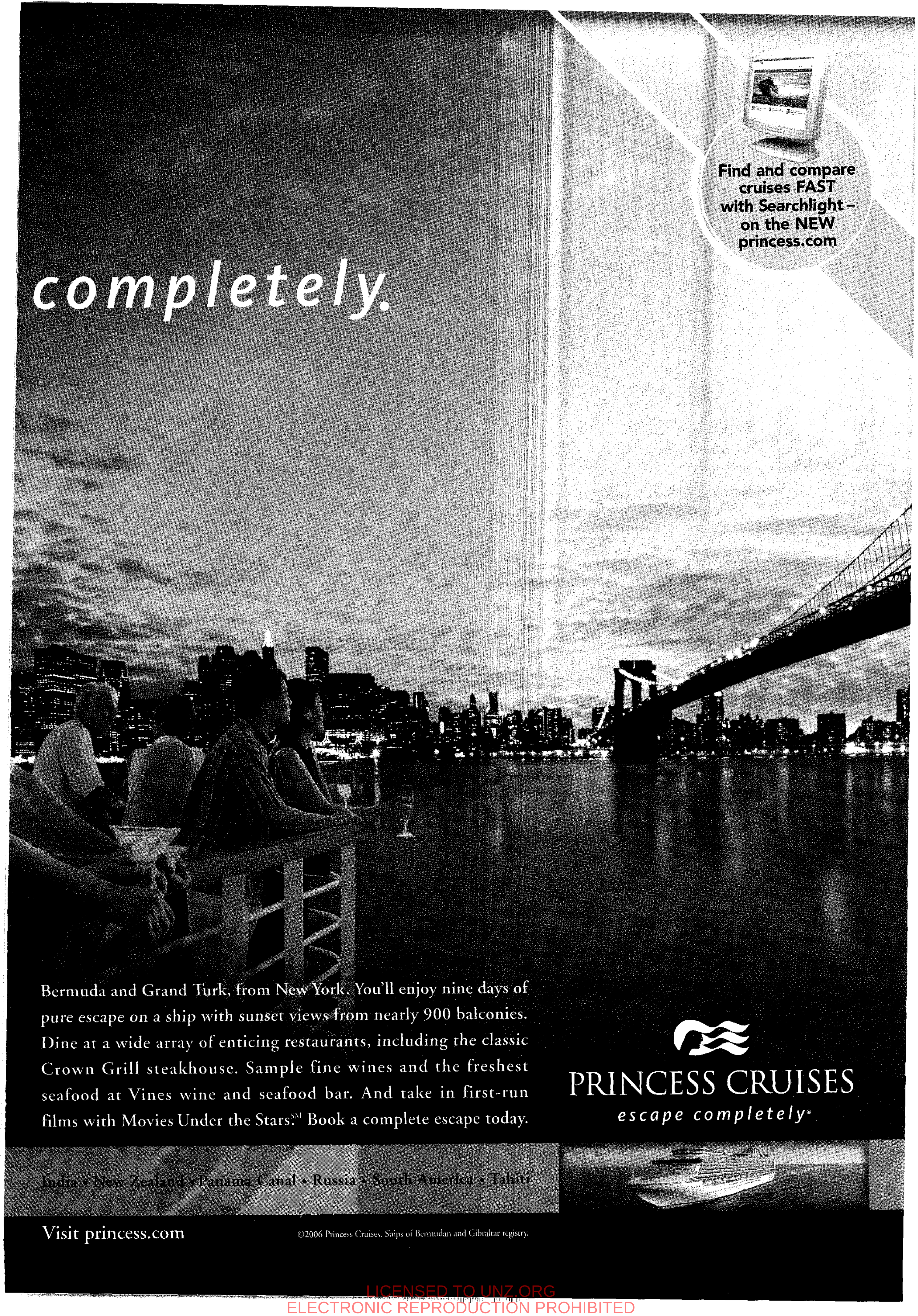
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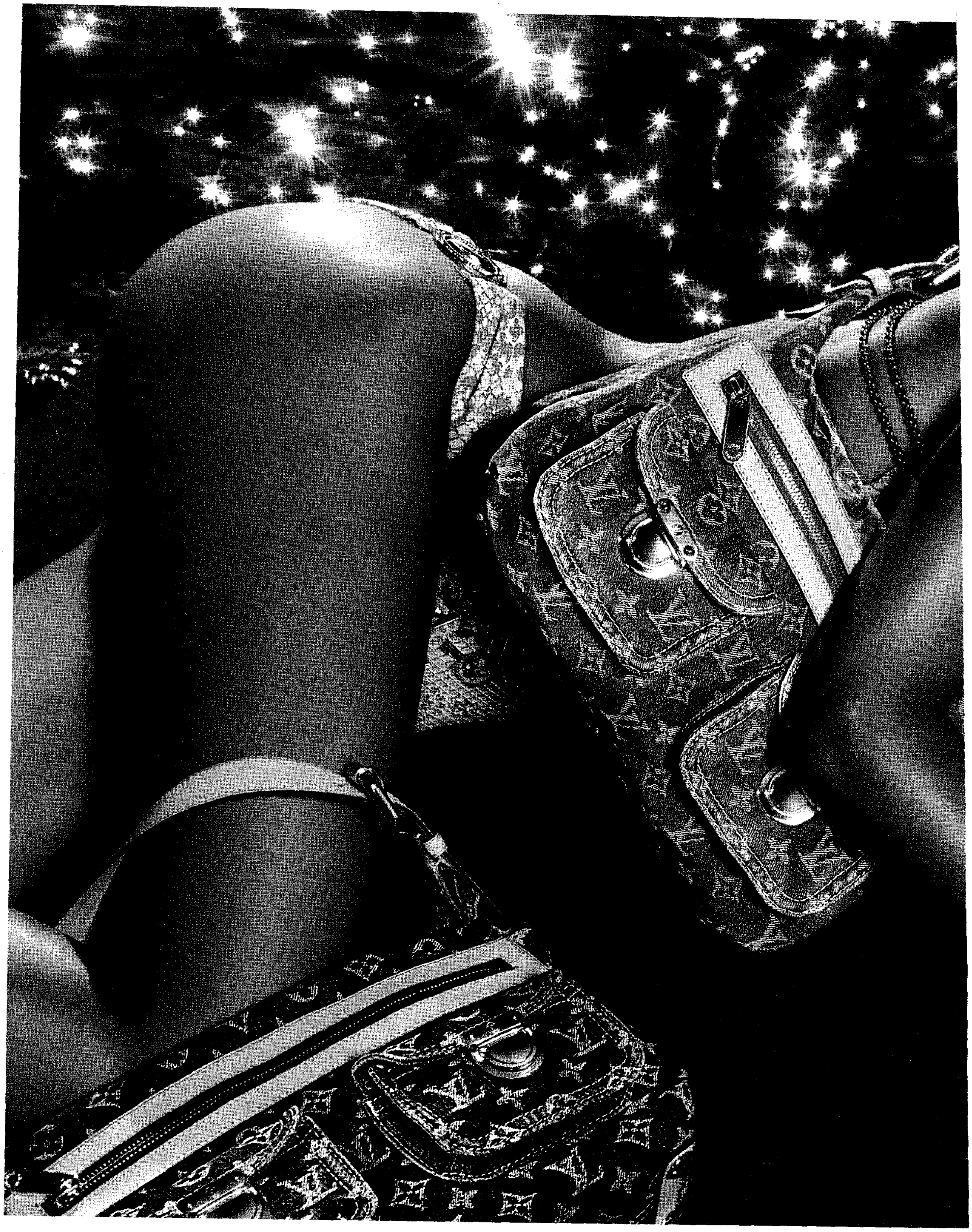

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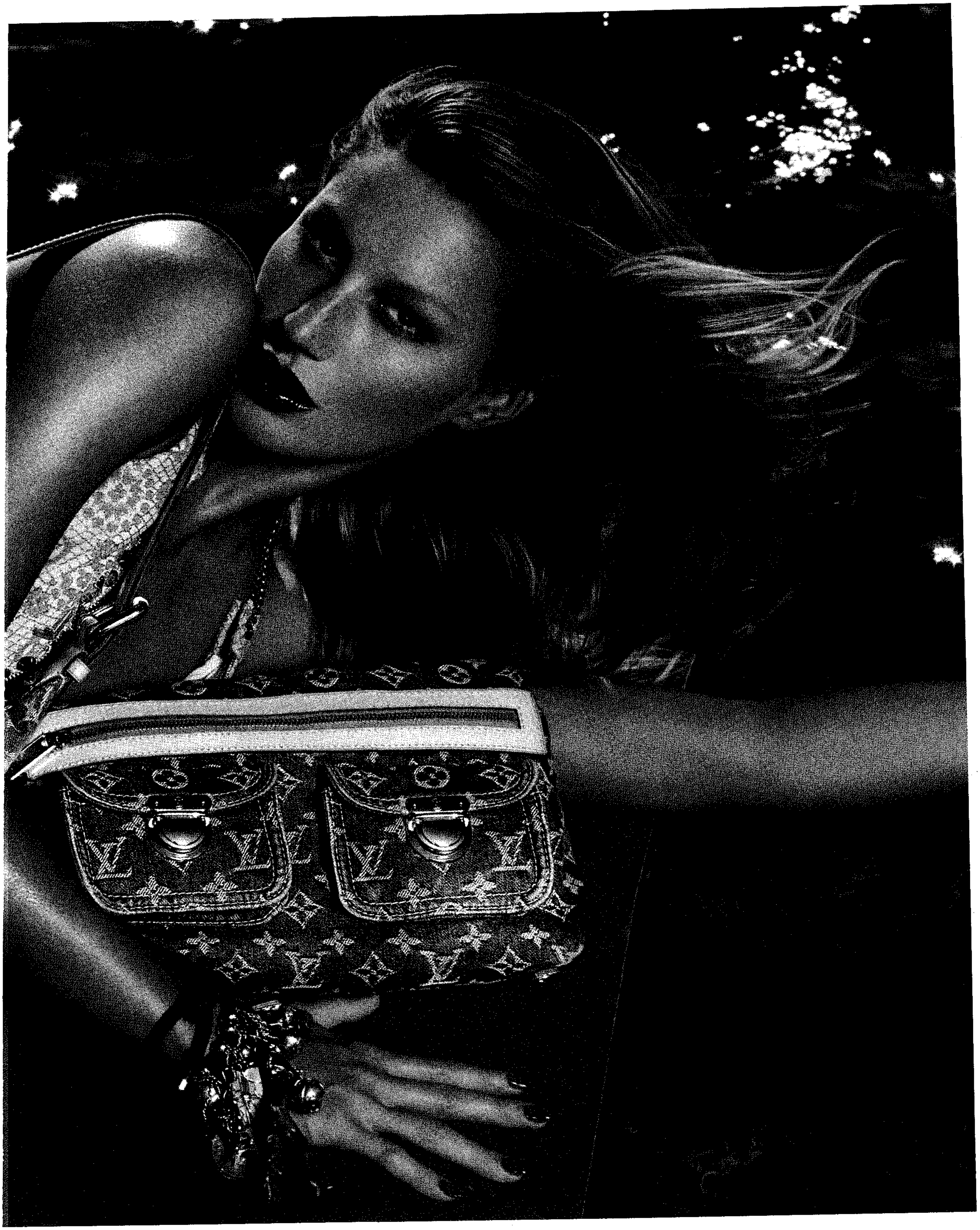

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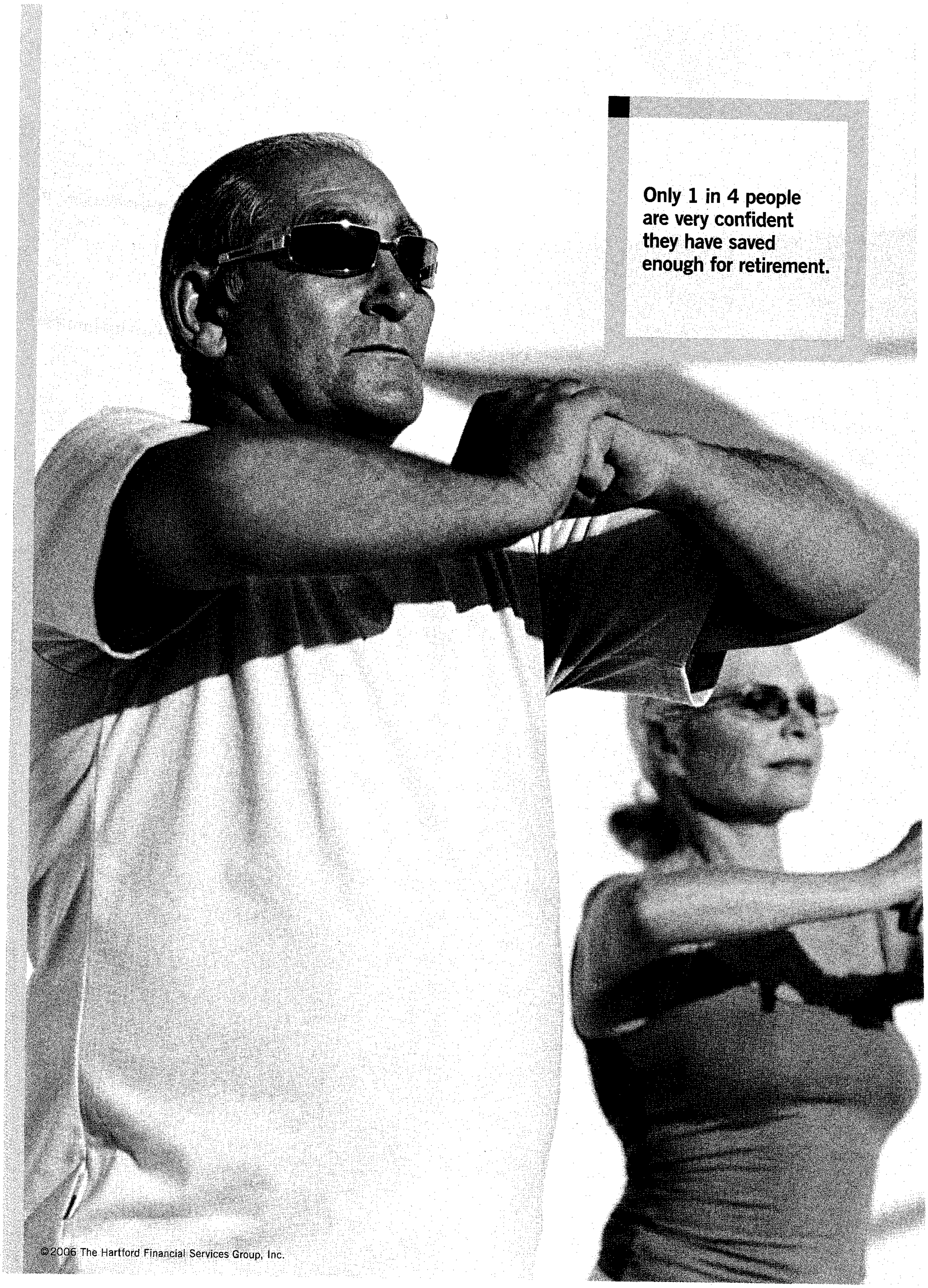
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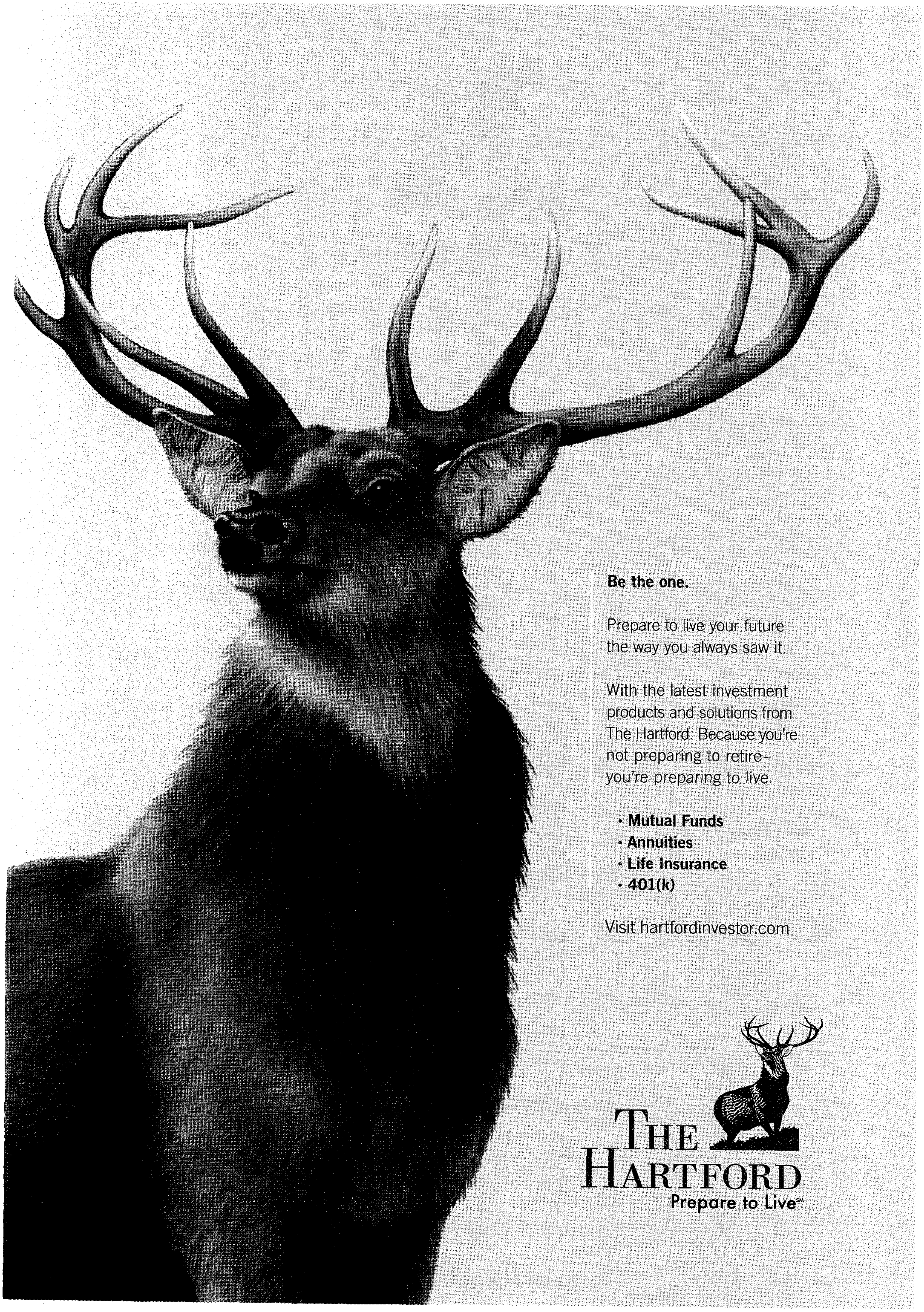

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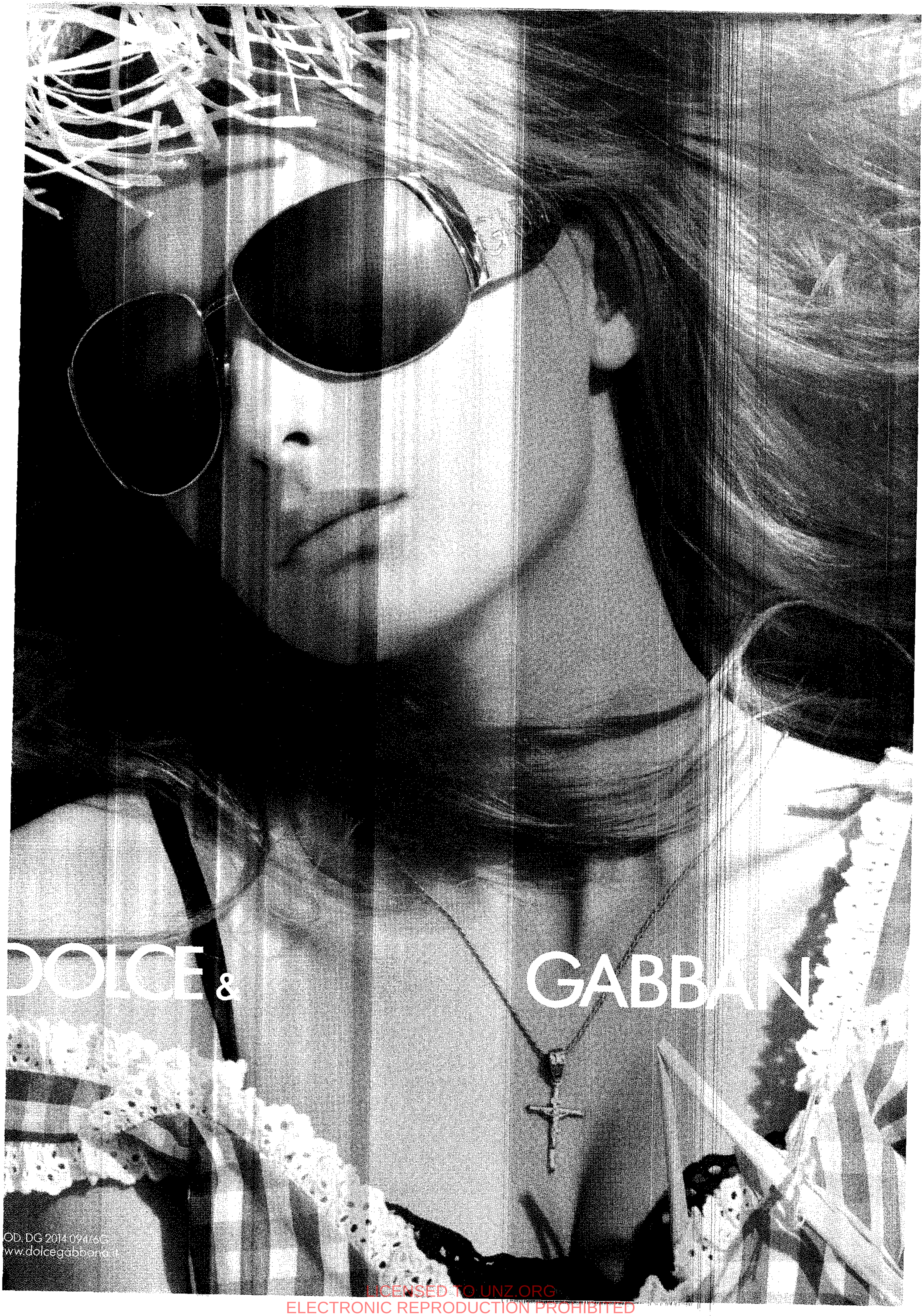
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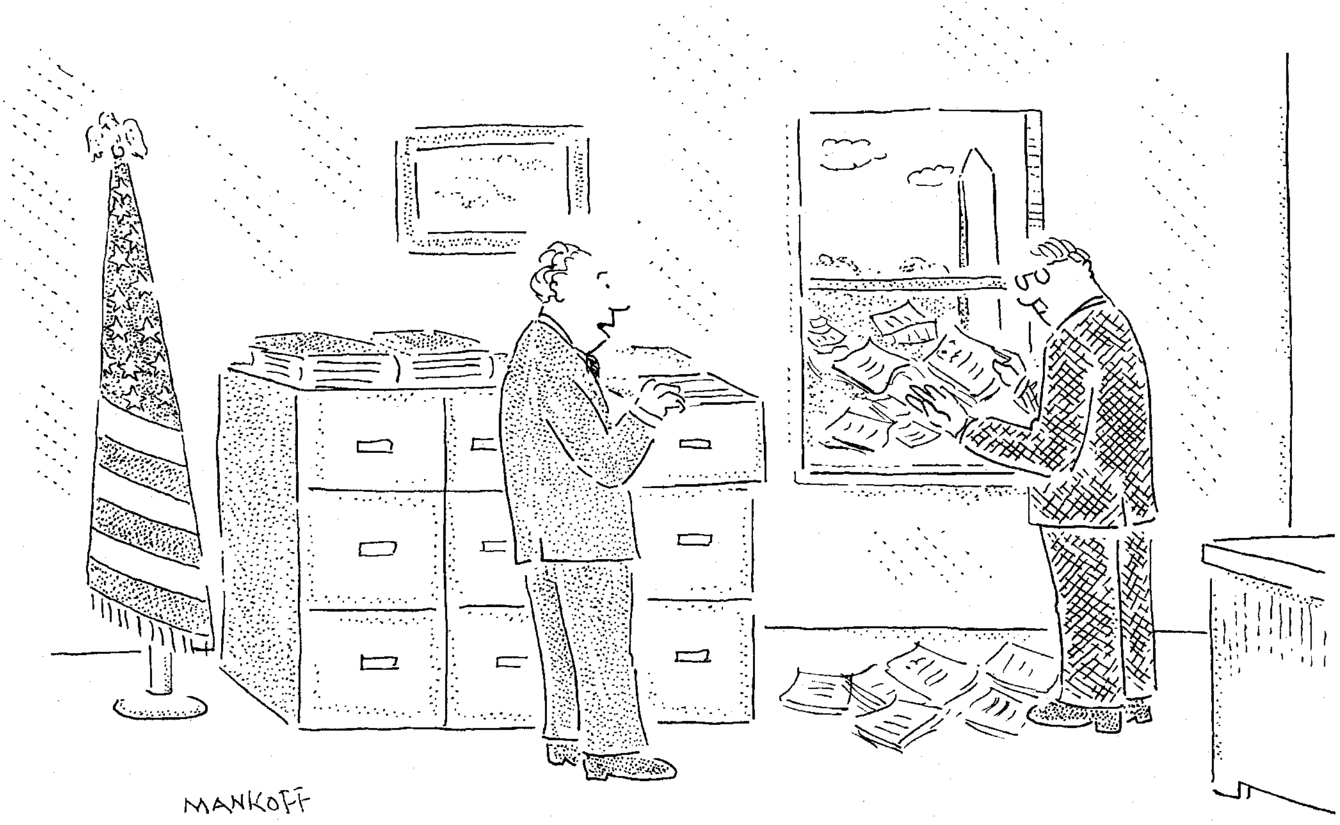

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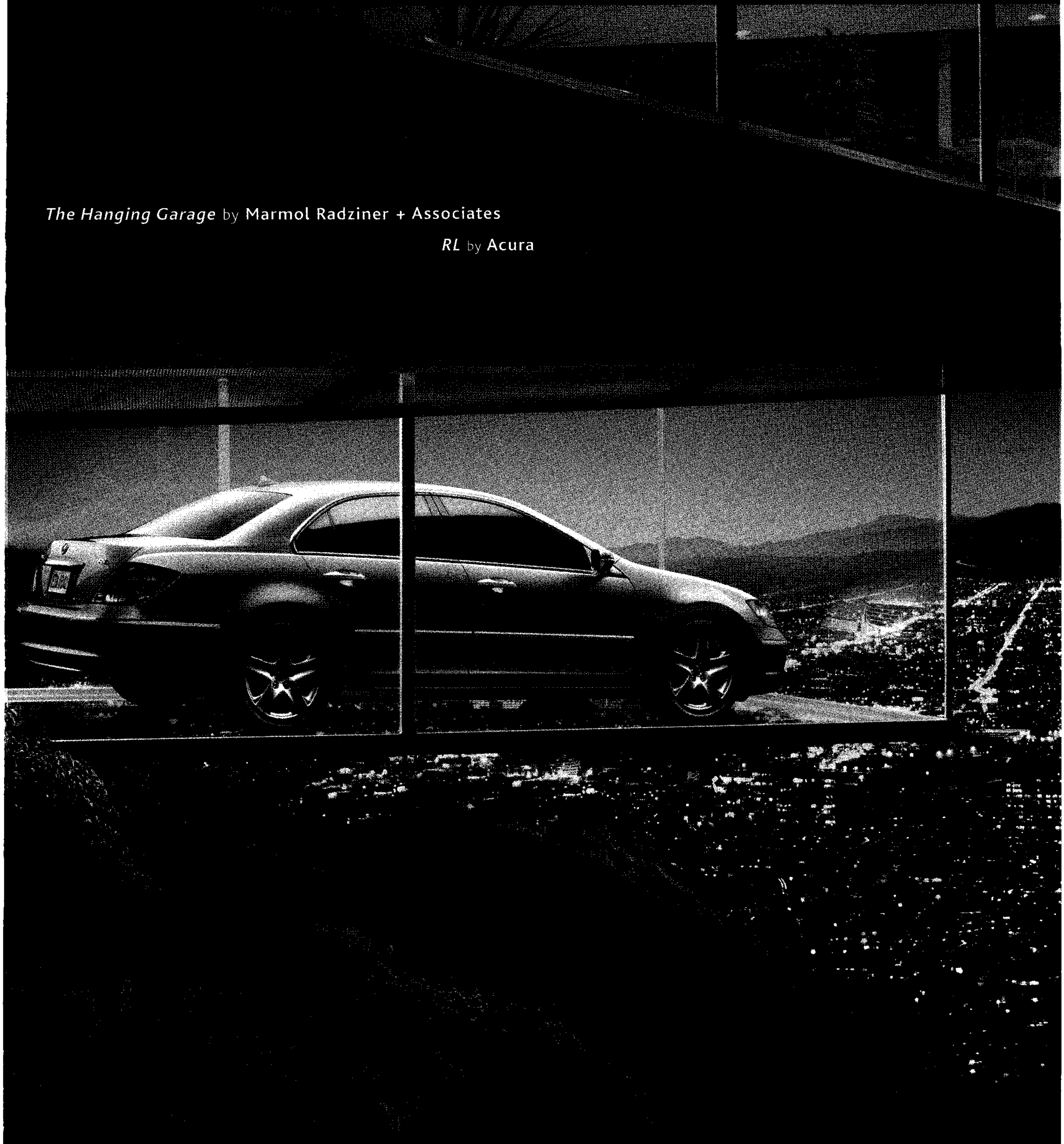

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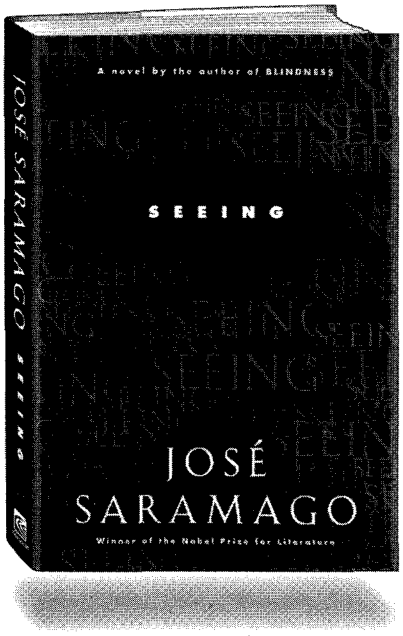
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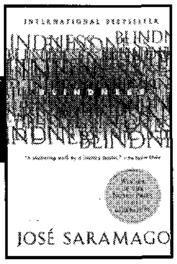

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# CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Zalewski ("The Ecstatic Truth," p. 124) is the magazine's features editor.

Anthony Lane ("High and Low," p. 56; The Current Cinema, p. 179), a film critic for the magazine, is the author of "Nobody's Perfect: Writings from *The New Yorker*."

Jonathan Stern (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 66) is a screenwriter and film producer.

Patrick Radden Keefe ("The Snakehead," p. 68) is a fellow at the Century Foundation and the author of "Chatter: Dispatches from the Secret World of Global Eavesdropping."

Nick Paumgarten ("Getting There," p. 86) is a staff writer.

Philip Schultz (Poem, p. 148) has published five books of poems, including "Living in the Past."

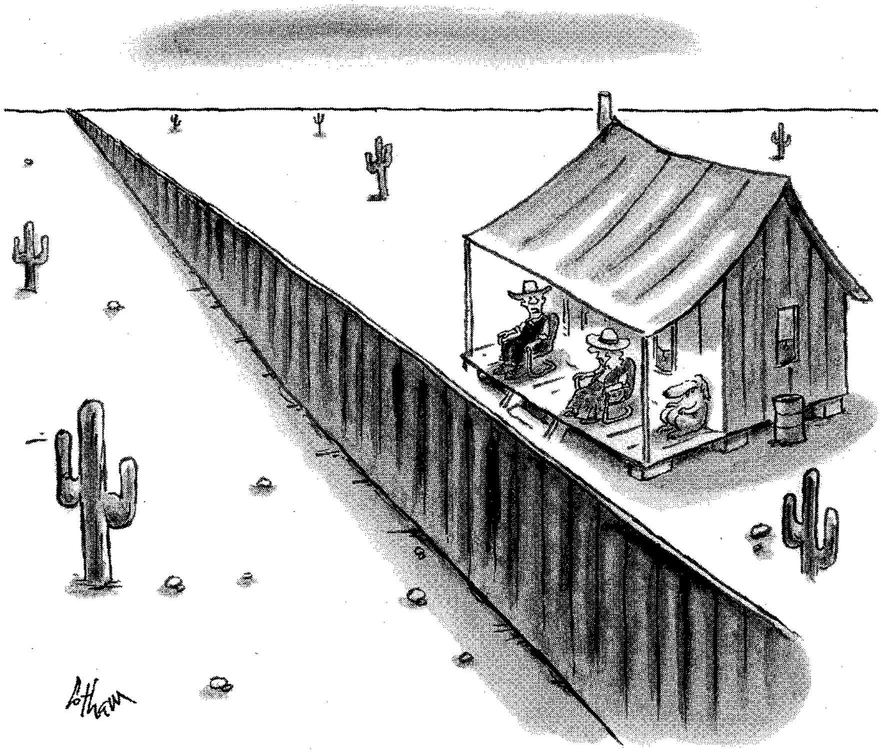
Dana Goodyear ("What Happened at Alder Creek?," p. 140) is an editor at the magazine. "Honey and Junk," her first book of poems, comes out in paperback in the fall.

Michael Specter ("Planet Kirsan," p. 112) is a staff writer.

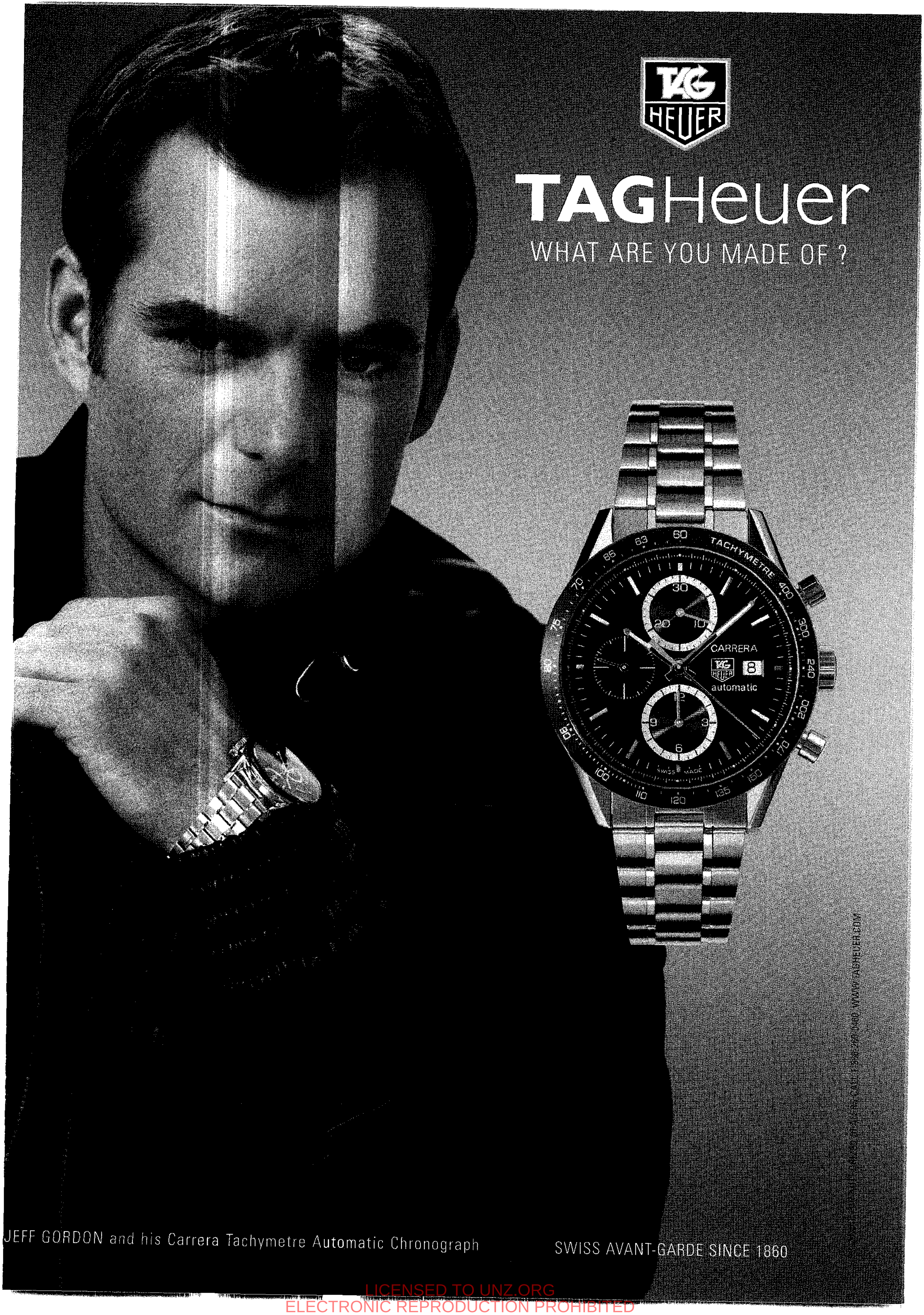
Martin Amis (Fiction, p. 152) has published nine novels and two collections of short stories. His new work of fiction, "House of Meetings," will be published early next year.

Jill Lepore (A Critic at Large, p. 164) is a professor of history at Harvard and the author of "New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan."

Alex Ross (Musical Events, p. 176) will receive a Letter of Distinction next month from the American Music Center. ♦



*"I guess the Garcías won't be coming to visit anymore."*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# THE MAIL

## MR. SHAWN AND MR. FOX

I write, somewhat reluctantly, in response to recent letters from Allen and Wallace Shawn and from Harper Lee regarding the depiction of William Shawn in the film "Capote" (The Mail, April 3rd and April 10th). In those letters, they note that Mr. Shawn was never in Kansas at the same time as Truman Capote. But my father, Joe Fox, was. As Capote's editor at Random House, he did make the trip there, in order to be available to Capote at the time of the executions. I know very little about the circumstances of the trip, other than what is suggested by some disturbing photographs of my father sitting on a headstone in a large cemetery and his description of flying home to New York with a sobbing, inconsolable Capote. My father's edict as an editor, much like Mr. Shawn's, was never, ever, to be seen or acknowledged. I write now because I feel that "Capote" has done a disservice to its subject and to those who helped him bring his masterpiece to the reading public, and that the record should be set straight.

*Logan Fox*
*Princeton, N.J.*

It is both touching and a little disconcerting that friends and family of William Shawn have been moved to write about the inaccurate depiction of him in the film "Capote." As with any work based on actual people and events, the film does indeed play with the facts, by compressing time sequences, imagining dialogue between characters, and making other alterations of reality. "Capote" is a dramatic film, after all, not a documentary. In their audio commentary accompanying the DVD of the film, the director, Bennett Miller, and the actor Philip Seymour Hoffman touch on several points that Shawn's sons mention (such as the fact that William Shawn never flew on a plane, was never in Kansas with Capote, and never introduced him at public readings). The filmmakers admit that they conflated Shawn's character with Capote's book editor. Hate them or love them for that decision, at least they acknowledge the inaccuracies.

*Robert Dunne*
*Manchester, Conn.*

## NOT QUITE UTOPIA

Boykin Curry's approach to utopia, as Ben McGrath describes it, fails to reflect on the ethics of buying up an enormous chunk of land from an impoverished country—in this case, the Dominican Republic—for private development ("The Utopians," March 20th). But their lack of concern for local culture doesn't stop at overlooking resident Dominicans as participants in the "Creative Person's Utopia" (except in "locally run fish shacks" or wherever they're needed to cart luggage and fill drink orders). This lack also extends into the realm of language; to speak of a "Dominican utopia," wrought by American money and influence, as a "benevolent dictatorship" is to make light of the role that American money and influence played in the creation and sustenance of the very real dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, which lasted thirty years and resulted in the deaths of thousands of Haitians and Dominicans.

*Alexander Cuadros*
*New York City*

## NIXON IN CHINA

Louis Menand, in reviewing Francis Fukuyama's new book, makes painstaking distinctions among today's conservative foreign-policy actors and analysts (Books, March 27th). But he carelessly asserts that "Richard Nixon, a career anti-Communist, following the instructions of his national-security adviser, the arch-realist Henry Kissinger, went to China." Kissinger's own memoirs reveal that both he and Nixon had independently come to believe that the United States should make an overture to China. He describes an interview and an article in 1968 and 1967, respectively, in which the future President called for

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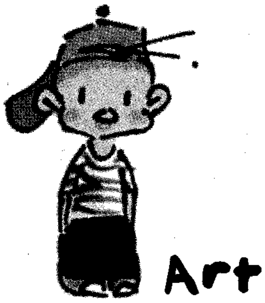

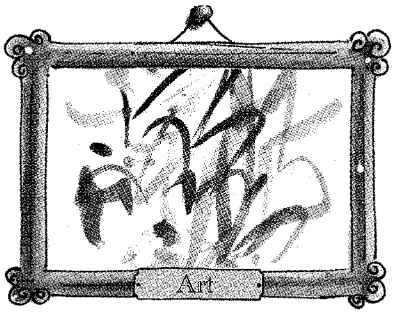

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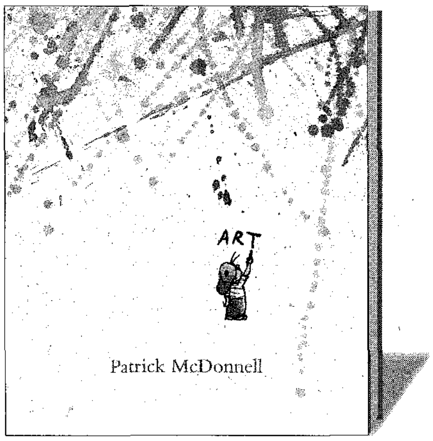

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dialogue with Beijing and for bringing China "back into the world community." The two men's retrospective writings reveal that they had somewhat different motives and aims in going to China, differences that should be chalked up not to some anti-Communist versus realist divide but to an earlier iteration of the current debate between so-called Wilsonians and realists. In the case of Nixon and Kissinger, it was a creative dynamic within a great partnership that achieved lasting progress for the United States and the world.
*The Reverend John H. Taylor*
*Executive Director, Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace Foundation*
*Yorba Linda, Calif.*

## FRAMING CHOICES

Leo Carey, in writing about the frame project at the Brooklyn Museum, illuminates a crucial element of curatorial work that is invisible to the public ("Frame Game," March 27th). Another aspect, however, should be noted: all the frames referred to in the beginning of the piece—those for the Monets, the Morisot, the Toulouse-Lautrecs, and the Caillebotte—were designed by Jared Bark, of Bark Frameworks, specifically for the picture they surround. The frame for the Pissarro painting, in contrast, attempts to replicate a specific frame from the period. This difference highlights an essential issue behind decisions about framing: the distinction between reproduction and invention.
*Elizabeth W. Easton*
*Chair, Department of European Painting and Sculpture*
*Brooklyn Museum*
*Brooklyn, N.Y.*

## IN THE CENTERFOLD

Thanks to Joan Acocella for the thoughtful review of "The Playmate Book: Six Decades of Centerfolds" (Books, March 20th). I can't explain why she finds the handwriting on Playmate Data Sheets to have been "the same from month to month," but I can attest to the fact that when I was on the magazine's staff full time, those sheets were indeed filled out by the Playmates themselves. On one occasion, as deadlines approached and a Playmate was (I swear!) attending law school at Cambridge University, we feared that we would have to forge hers based on information on the original application that she'd filled out for the photo department. Fortunately, the Royal Mail (and the U.S.P.S.) came through in time and we were spared this subterfuge.
*Gretchen Edgren*
*Contributing Editor, Playboy*
*Holmes Beach, Fla.*

Because of *Playboy's* unique ability to be perceived as harmless and playful, it is often regarded as the most pervasive and insidious of all pornographic publications. It ought to have been noted, in a review of *Playboy's* recent coffee-table retrospective, complete with a collage of nude photographs from those pages, that this is a publication many consider to be dedicated to the objectification, prostitution, and degradation of women.
*Candace Margulies*
*Minneapolis, Minn.*

## THE COST OF IMMIGRATION

In noting the benefits of immigration in general, John Cassidy neglects some of the problems of illegal immigration (Comment, April 10th). Those now flooding across our porous borders, most of whom come from Mexico, are generally poor, unskilled, and unassimilated. Their marginalization began with the corrupt Mexican government, but their exploitation is continued by employers in the United States who are interested only in cheap labor and bigger profits. Cassidy mentions the contributions of illegal immigrants who work for low wages, but fails to point out the enormous costs to the rest of us, as they overwhelm our social services, schools, hospitals, and prisons.
*Doris O'Brien*
*Senior Writing Fellow, Californians for Population Stabilization*
*Santa Barbara, Calif.*

•

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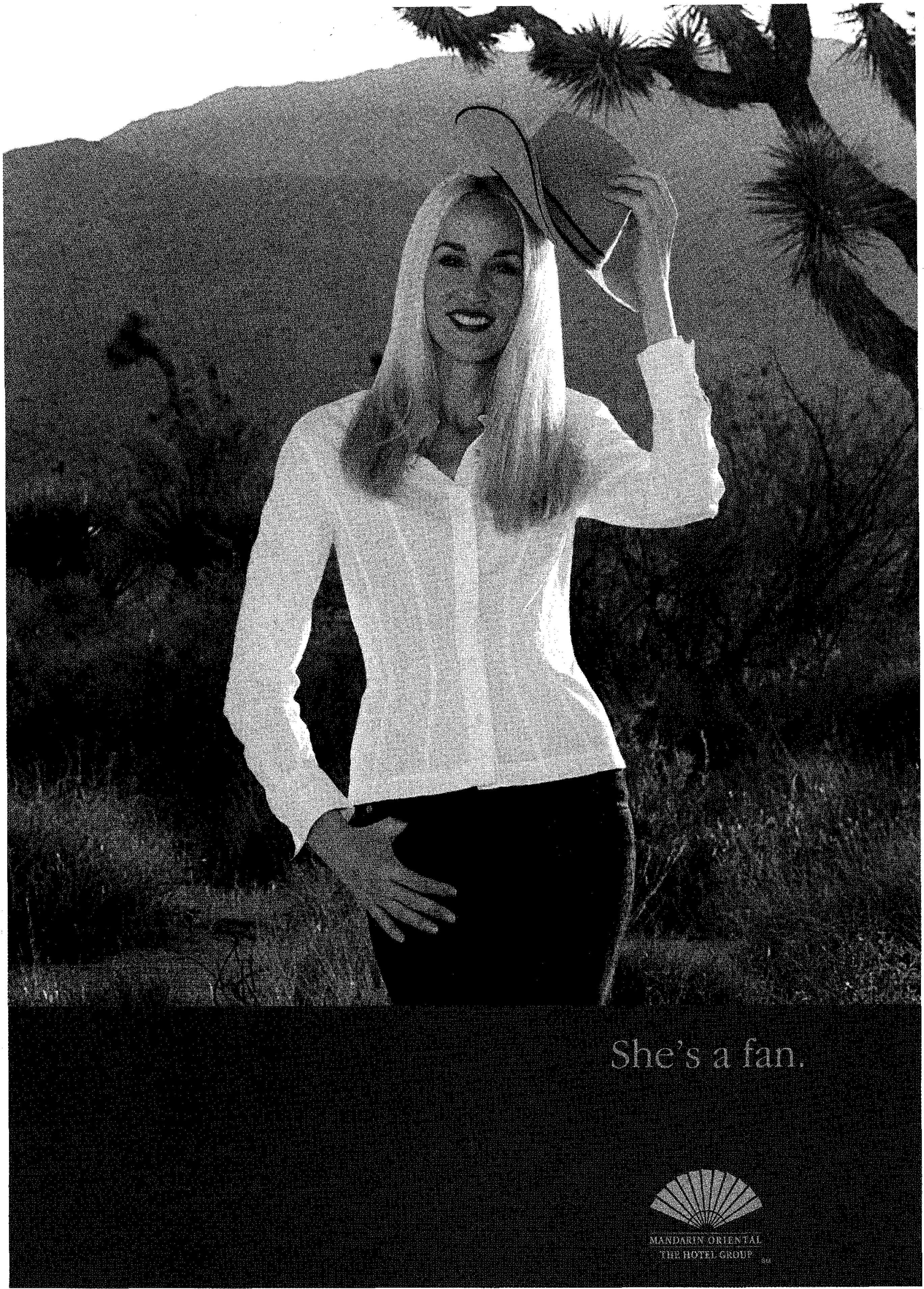
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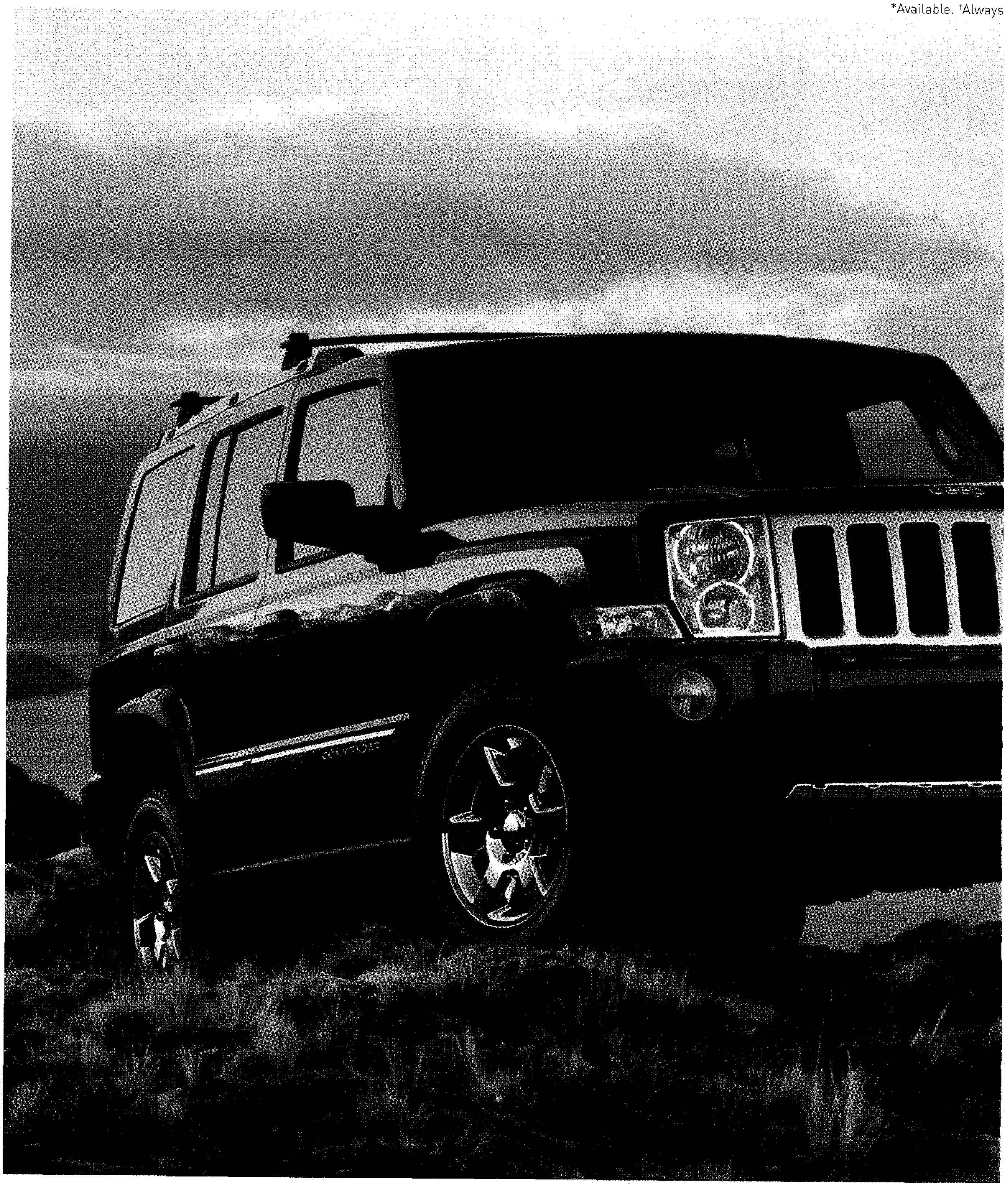

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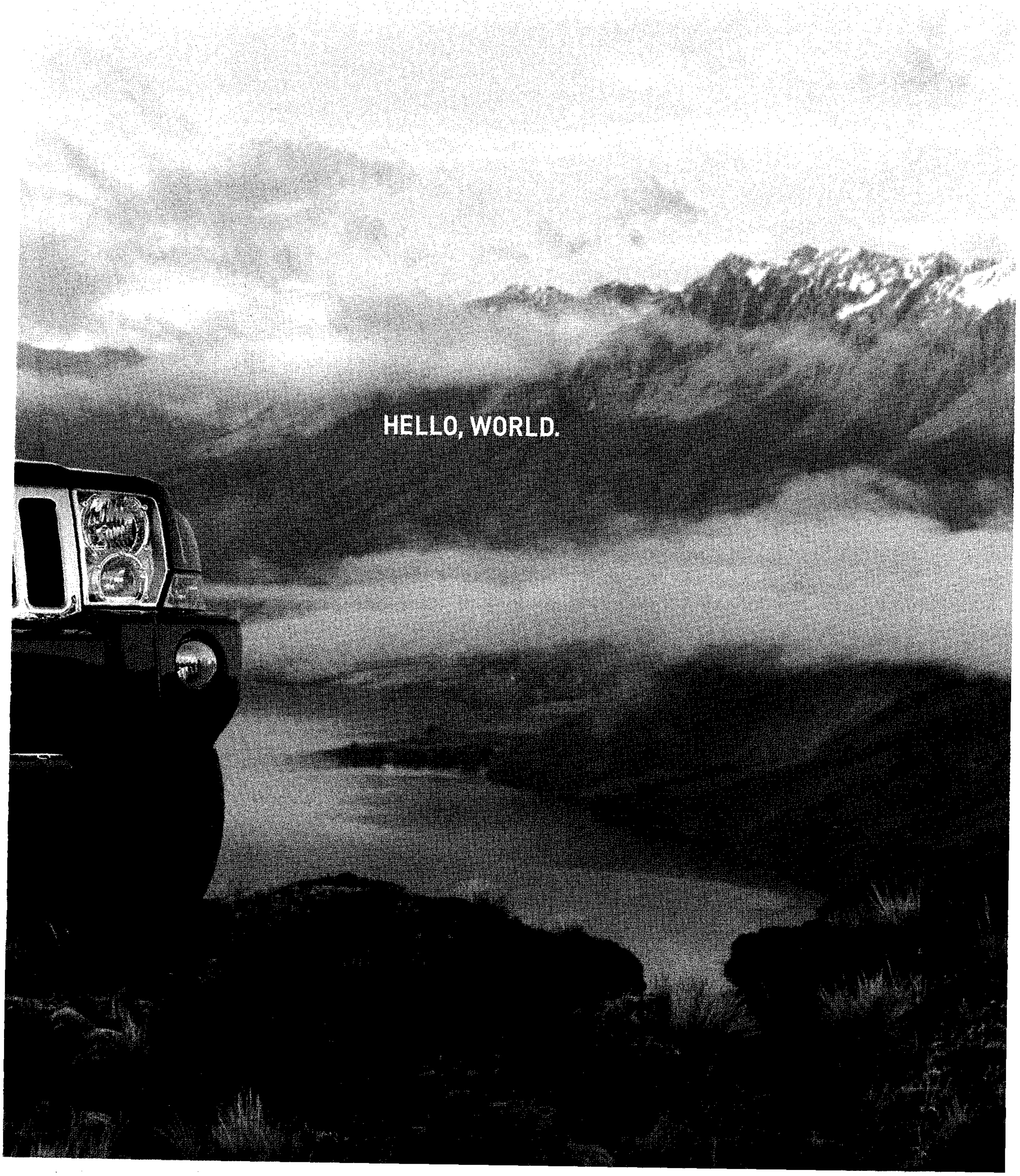

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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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| 23 | 24 | 25 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |

## THIS WEEK

## NIGHT LIFE
### UNDER ONE ROOF

The jam-band movement exists largely outside the world of FM radio, the screens of MTV, and the aisles of your local record store. Fully experiencing the genre's signature extended improvisations is difficult without, say, a summer to spare. But its top musicians, including ex-members of the Grateful Dead and Phish and descendants of Bob Marley, gather annually for one long party called the Jammys, this year in the Theatre at Madison Square Garden. (See page 26.)

## ART
### OUT OF AFRICA

The work in "Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography," now at the International Center of Photography, comes from all over the continent and offers a wildly intelligent survey of young artists—Hala Elkoussy, from Egypt, and Michael Tsegaye, from Ethiopia, are future stars. (See page 28.)

## DANCE
### SPRING RITES

In "Sourcing Stravinsky," at Dance Theatre Workshop, several choreographers, including Rennie Harris and David Neumann, contribute new works set to the music of Igor Stravinsky. The former Judson Dance diva Yvonne Rainer adapts Balanchine's "Agon" in "AG Indexical, with a Little Help from H.M."—that is, Henry Mancini's "Pink Panther" theme—for a female quartet. (See page 35.)

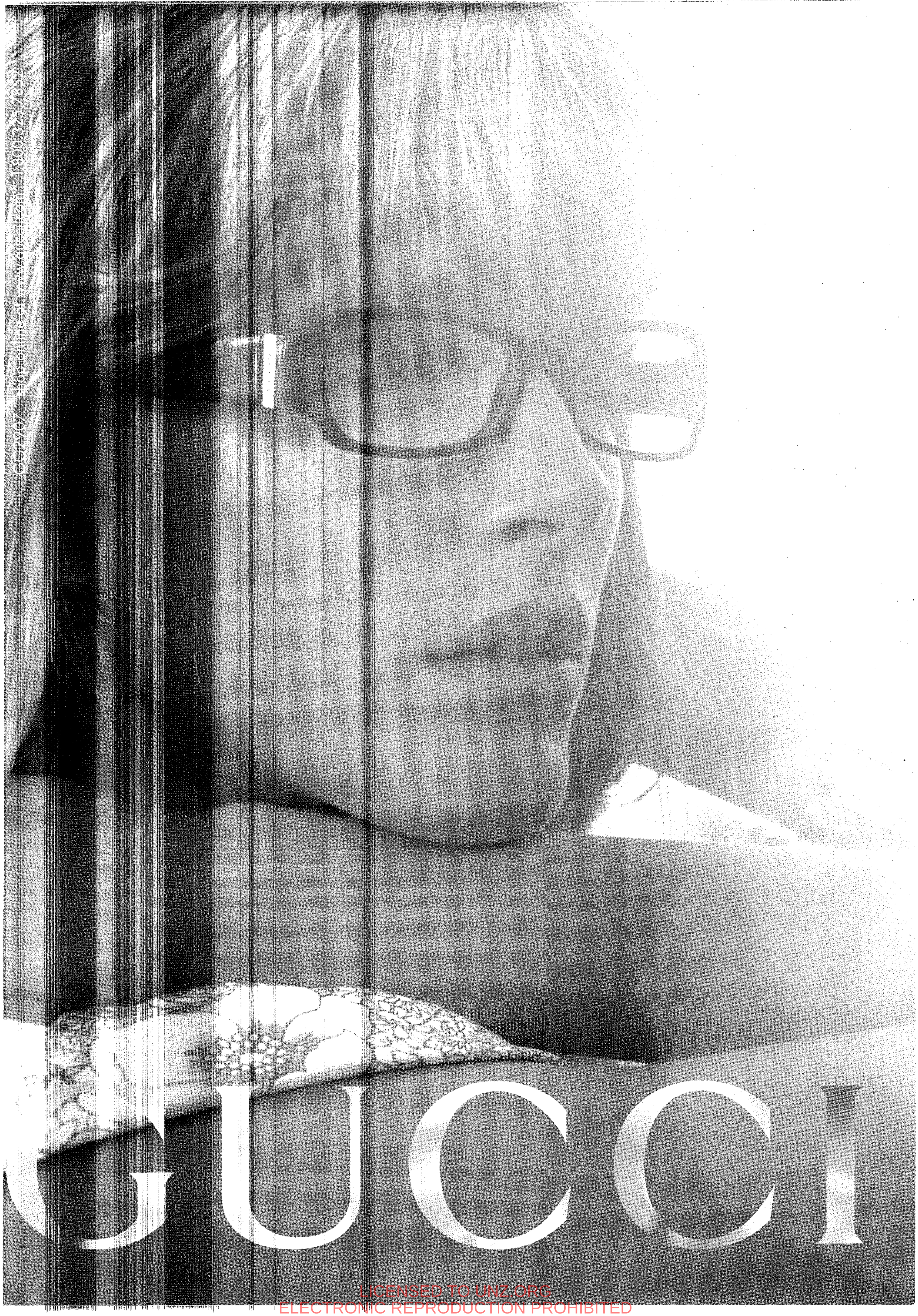
## CLASSICAL MUSIC
### MOTHER RUSSIA

The formidable mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina (with the bass Ildar Abdrazakov) offers a sweeping recital of Russian songs and arias by Borodin, Tchaikovsky, Glinka, Cui, Rachmaninoff, and Rimsky-Korsakov at Carnegie Hall. (See page 38.)

## MOVIES
### THE SHORT VERSION

In France after May, 1968, artists in all genres sought new forms to contain the vast new possibilities. Jacques Rivette's twelve-hour "Out 1: Noli Me Tangere" was one attempt; Anthology Film Archives presents his four-and-a-half-hour reduction of it, "Out 1: Spectre." (See page 42.)

*The opening day of Little League, in Prospect Park. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.*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**THE CAINE MUTINY COURT-MARTIAL**
David Schwimmer stars in a revival of Herman Wouk's 1954 play, based on his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, about a naval lieutenant on trial for mutiny during the Second World War. Jerry Zaks directs. In previews. (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

**CORTEO**
Cirque du Soleil comes to town with a show about a clown who imagines his funeral as a carnival. Previews begin April 25. (Randall's Island Park. 800-678-5440.)

**CUL-DE-SAC**
Transport Group presents the world première of a new play by John Cariani, which explores three households in one neighborhood. Previews begin April 20. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

**THE DROWSY CHAPERONE**
A new meta-musical, about a theatre fan in a reverie over his favorite musical, starring Bob Martin and Sutton Foster. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

**FAITH HEALER**
Ralph Fiennes, Cherry Jones, and Ian McDiarmid star in a revival of Brian Friel's 1979 play, about a man with a gift for healing, his long-suffering wife, and his loyal manager. Jonathan Kent directs. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

**FAUST**
David Herskovits directs Target Margin Theatre's production of parts one and two of Goethe's masterpiece. Previews begin April 21. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

**A FINE & PRIVATE PLACE**
York Theatre Company presents a musical fantasy about finding love in a cemetery, based on the novel by Peter S. Beagle. Gabriel Barre directs. In previews. (York Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

**THE HISTORY BOYS**
Nicholas Hytner directs Alan Bennett's tale of unruly British prep schoolers and the ideologically opposed teachers responsible for their tutelage. In previews. Opens April 23. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

**HOT FEET**
Maurice Hines conceived, directed, and choreographed this dance musical set to the groovy tunes of Earth, Wind & Fire, co-created with Maurice White. Previews begin April 20. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

**J.A.P. CHRONICLES, THE MUSICAL**
Written and composed by Isabel Rose, who also stars, this musical, based on her novel, is about six former bunkmates at a camp reunion. In previews. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

**LESTAT**
The new musical based on Anne Rice's "Vampire Chronicles" features music by Elton John and lyrics by Bernie Taupin. In previews. Opens April 25. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

**THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE**
Martin McDonagh's gory black comedy, about a terrorist from Galway whose beloved cat is found dead, moves to Broadway. Previews begin April 19. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

**MARY STUART**
The Pearl presents the play by Friedrich Schiller, about the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, upon decree by her cousin Queen Elizabeth. Directed by Eleanor Holdridge. Previews begin April 20. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

**THE MISTAKES MADELINE MADE**
Naked Angels presents a new comedy by Elizabeth Meriwether ("Heddatron"), directed by Evan Cabnet, about a young personal assistant with a fear of bathing and a penchant for bad poets. In previews. Opens April 23. (45 Below, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

**SORE THROATS**
Theatre for a New Audience presents the New York première of a play by Howard Brenton, about a woman whose twenty-year marriage collapses. Evan Yionoulis directs. Previews begin April 22. (The Duke on 42nd St., 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

**TARZAN**
Disney's version of Edgar Rice Burroughs's classic story comes to Broadway. With a book by David Henry Hwang and music by Phil Collins. Bob Crowley directs. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

*The French pop project Nouvelle Vague plays Irving Plaza.*

YUKO SHIMIZU

**THREE DAYS OF RAIN**
Julia Roberts, Paul Rudd, and Bradley Cooper star in a revival of Richard Greenberg's drama about siblings who unearth secrets about their late father. Opens April 19. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents the operetta by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, adapted by Wallace Shawn. Starring Alan Cumming, Cyndi Lauper, and Nellie McKay. Scott Elliott directs. In previews. Opens April 20. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

**THE WEDDING SINGER**
A musical based on the 1998 movie, about a wedding singer who falls in love with a bride-to-be in New Jersey in the eighties. John Rando directs. In previews. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

## NOW PLAYING

**AWAKE AND SING!**
Clifford Odets's 1935 drama focusses on a Jewish family in the Bronx during the Depression. Starring Lauren Ambrose, Ben Gazzara, Mark Ruffalo, and Zoë Wanamaker. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

**BASED ON A TOTALLY TRUE STORY**
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, about a young comic-book writer on the verge of fame. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

**LOS BIG NAMES**
Adopting the physicality of an overcaffeinated animatron, Marga Gomez, with prickly buoyancy, stages a textured one-woman show about the outlandish variety-show performers she called Mom and Dad, as well as her own nonstarter attempts at Hollywood fame. As a Latina lesbian in show business, Gomez has had her share of frustrations, but her performance, patched together with memories, riffs, and flights of fancy, elicits farce from moments of disappointment and finds dignity in episodes of farce. Even in the show's comic climax, a re-creation of her bit part in the sci-fi bomb "Sphere," the ghosts of her flamboyant parents are standing by, pressing her to carry on the family's cracked legacy. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

**DEVIL LAND**
The world première of a play based on the true story of the 1999 kidnapping of a twelve-year-old Bronx girl, written by Desi Moreno-Penson. (Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

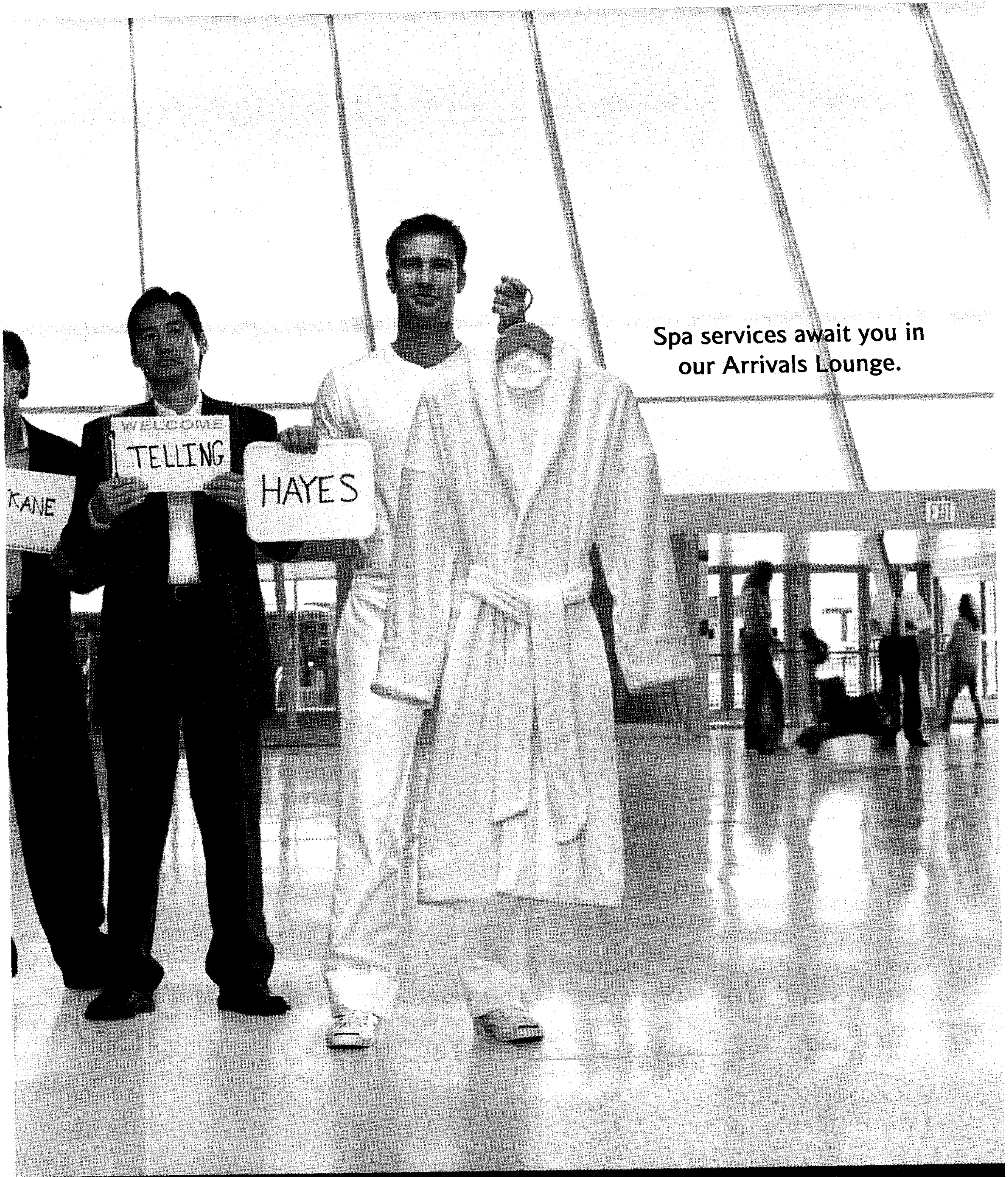
**FESTEN**
The American première of a play by David Eldridge, adapted from the 1998 Dogme film "The Celebration," starring Larry Bryggman, Jeremy Sisto, Michael Hayden, Ali MacGraw, and Julianna Margulies. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

**GUARDIANS**
According to Peter Morris's political drama, all the world's a leather bar and all the players in the war on terror—Bush and Blair, journalists and their subjects, torturers and their detainees—are merely tops and bottoms in a global game of S & M. In braiding together the monologues of two characters, one a thinly veiled Lynndie England (Katherine Moennig, from "The L Word"), the other a gleefully amoral British tabloid reporter (Lee Pace), Morris teases some provocative imagery out of his essentially reductionist schema. However, he tends to answer his own pointed questions about relative power and guilt before they've had the chance to linger. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**
Lynn Redgrave stars as Lady Bracknell in Oscar Wilde's play, in a Theatre Royal Bath/Peter Hall Company production. Sir Peter Hall directs. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

**A JEW GROWS IN BROOKLYN**
An autobiographical musical comedy about the family of the playwright, Jake Ehrenreich (who also stars). (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 212-352-3101.)

**LANDSCAPE OF THE BODY**
Signature Theatre Company presents a play by John Guare, set in Greenwich Village in the seventies, starring Lili Taylor and Sherie Rene Scott. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-352-3101.)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## CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
## THE NAN DIARIES

For anyone who's followed Nan Goldin's career since the mid-eighties, when the startlingly intimate photographs that she published as "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency" turned this underground hero into an art-world sensation, her current show at Matthew Marks is especially painful to see. The gallery has mounted a number of Goldin's color photographs, including moody landscapes, two shaky self-portraits, and several pictures of melodramatically stormy skies. But these framed pieces are primarily a prelude and a footnote to a three-screen projection of still and moving images that conflates the history of St. Barbara with that of Goldin's troubled sister, Barbara (who threw herself under a train at the age of eighteen), and of Goldin herself (filmed in a rehab facility, stubbing lit cigarettes out in the already wounded flesh of her forearm). Goldin's backsliding into drug use has been the subtext of much of her work over the past decade. Here, it becomes the subject of a more explicitly confessional show that is nearly as maddening as it is heartbreaking. No one can be as merciless with Goldin as she is with herself, but that doesn't make the spectacle any easier to bear.

—*Vince Aletti*

NAN GOLDIN

**ON THE LINE**
The actor-playwright Joe Roland's peppery dialogue captures the infectious comic energy of masculine friendship, especially in his early scenes, which follow three rebellious boys from playground pugilism to riotous adolescence and beyond. As adults, the friends remain in their blue-collar town, working, drinking, and reliving their hell-raising youth. When a labor strike galvanizes the factory where the three work, it drives a wedge between unionist Dev (Roland) and ambitious Mikey (David Prete), who crosses over to the management side—thrusting Jimmy (John Zibell) into the peacemaker's role. Though the playwright allows a note of melodrama to infiltrate his second act, his strong ear for dialogue makes the characters so engaging that their spontaneity succeeds in transcending the plot's constraints. Directed by Peter Sampieri and presented by Mike Nichols. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200. Through April 23.)

**SANDRA BERNHARD: EVERYTHING BAD AND BEAUTIFUL**
Sandra Bernhard's latest act is a sort of confidence trick, selling the thrill of badness while picking the public's pocket. Bernhard is a connoisseur of sour, but her comic masquerade does little to hide the envy she feels for most of the things she mocks. She works hard at being insouciant, but, in fact, her soi-disant material is unfocussed and defanged. Bernhard seems to have almost nothing to say—only the power to say it venomously. This isn't comedy; it's vamping. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/17/06.) (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

**SHOW PEOPLE**
In this jolly, well-turned romp, two old troupers (the expert Lawrence Pressman and Debra Monk) are hired to pose for a weekend as the parents of a quirky young tycoon (Ty Burrell), who is about to pop the question to his fiancée (the droll Judy Greer). Paul Weitz's new play (directed by Peter Askin) is an affectionate examination of artifice, acting, and the state of the profession with some damned-good farcical twists. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

**STUFF HAPPENS**
David Hare's drama about the Iraq war has its New York première at the Public. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

**33 TO NOTHING**
Tensions simmer among the members of a Lower East Side rock band, in a musical play by Grant James Varjas, who also stars as Gray, the group's emotionally adolescent front man. Gray's petulance stems in part from his unresolved feelings for his ex-boyfriend, Bri (Preston Clarke), who, as luck would have it, is also in the band; during one particularly unproductive jam session, their problems finally come to a head and begin to tear the group apart. The show's low-key vibe makes a welcome variation on the overamplified grandeur of most rock musicals—though it proves here to be a difficult match for high drama. (Bottle Factory, 195 E. 3rd St. 212-868-4444.)

**TRYST**
In the British playwright Karoline Leach's subtle, provocative play (well directed by Joe Brancato), the handsome George Love (Maxwell Caulfield) is the con man; Adelaide Pinchin (the outstanding Amelia Campbell) is a trusting and lonely milliner who is frank about her homeliness. As Campbell plays her, Adelaide has a clear-eyed, compelling decency, which gets under George's shellac of savoir faire. The achievement of "Tryst" is to open a window onto George's psychotic deadness, as well as onto Adelaide's oversized heart. The narrative captures something that is rarely acknowledged in life: the envy that makes it impossible for some wounded souls to show gratitude or to accept goodness when it is finally offered. (4/17/06) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

### *Also Playing*

**AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BAREFOOT IN THE PARK:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **BRIDGE & TUNNEL:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **GEORGE M. COHAN TONIGHT!:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **GREY GARDENS:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through April 23. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **THE PAJAMA GAME:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **RED LIGHT WINTER:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **A SAFE HARBOR FOR ELIZABETH BISHOP:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. **SARAH, PLAIN AND TALL:** Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **WELL:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

## NIGHT LIFE
## ROCK AND POP

*Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.*

**B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL**
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—April 21: **Béla Fleck,** who has parlayed banjo virtuosity and matinée-idol looks into a successful recording career, stops by with songs from his latest release, "The Hidden Land." He and his Flecktones have a tendency to tiptoe perilously close to jazz-fusion territory, but for the most part they offer mildly challenging, good-natured instrumental music. April 22: **Little Feat.** Although this great Southern-fried band has never been the same since the death of its leader, Lowell George, in 1979, it always makes up in enthusiasm what it lacks in inspiration.

**CBGB & OMFUG**
315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-982-4052)—April 20: **King Missile,** the gaggle of downtown wiseacres led by John S. Hall that gave the world "Jesus Was Way Cool," "Take Stuff from Work," and the 1992 modern-rock hit "Detachable Penis," returns for more absurd fun. They'll be joined by **God Is My Co-Pilot** for an early salvo in the farewell salute to this storied punk-rock venue, which is scheduled to close in October.

**GREEN APPLE MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL**
The neo-hippies among us get down to business with a new gathering in honor of Earth Day (see Above and Beyond). More than thirty of the city's clubs are hosting a wide variety of music from April 20 to April 23. For details, visit www.greenapplemusicandartsfestival.com. Those who want to catch many of the artists in one place (and who have five hours to spare) should check out the Jammys (see the Theatre at Madison Square Garden).

**IRVING PLAZA**
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—April 21: **Nouvelle Vague** is a French pop project (two male producers, a bevy of young female singers) that gives New Wave and post-punk songs from the early eighties a seductive bossa-nova spin. Their eponymous début album transforms "Too Drunk to Fuck," "Guns of Brixton," "Love Will Tear Us Apart," and various other Doc Martens standards into dinner-party-friendly fare. April 22: **Béla Fleck** and the **Flecktones.** (See the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill.) April 25: **Taking Back Sunday,** emo-punks from Amityville.

**ISSUE PROJECT ROOM**
400 Carroll St., Brooklyn (718-330-0313)—April 21: **Melomane,** a Brooklyn-based collective known for intricate pop songs with chamber-music flourishes, sets up shop in this converted silo beside the Gowanus Canal to celebrate the release of its third CD, "Glaciers." The singing, which is done by the Parisian-born front man Pierre de Gaillande and the bassist Daria Klotz, rises to adventurous peaks, and

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the rest of the band—a cellist, a keyboardist, a drummer, and often a violinist and cornettist—gives the material a cinematic lushness. On "Glaciers," the songs move with a deliberate force that befits the album's title.

**JOE'S PUB**

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—April 24: The artist **Ben Katchor** and the musician **Mark Mulcahy** present "The Rosenbach Company," a wholly original piece of musical theatre that uses drawings and songs to tell the story of two brothers, Dr. A. S. W. and Philip Rosenbach. The two were leading collectors of books and decorative-art objects in the first half of the twentieth century, and their home in Philadelphia, which is now a museum, includes a bookcase that once belonged to Herman Melville, manuscripts for Joyce's "Ulysses" and Conrad's "Lord Jim," and thousands of drawings by the children's-book author Maurice Sendak.

**MAKOR**

35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—Led by the Pennsylvania native and multi-instrumentalist (tin whistle, banjo, fiddle) Seamus Egan, **Solas** has become one of the most acclaimed American bands on the contemporary Celtic-music scene. Egan's broad experience (he's performed with everyone from Ralph Stanley to Vernon Reid) and his band members' virtuosity keep the music as bracing as a shot of Bushmills. The group, which is touring in celebration of its tenth anniversary, is here on April 20.

**MERCURY LOUNGE**

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—April 19: **Jon Langford,** the irrepressible Mekons front man, swings by with his current band, Ship & Pilot, featuring veterans of the Mekons and Pere Ubu as well as a violinist, Jean Cook. The silken-voiced **Sally Timms,** another Mekons member, will also be on hand.

**S.O.B.'S**

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—April 20: **Aphrodesia,** an eleven-piece Afro-beat ensemble from San Francisco, builds driving dance music in the tradition of Fela Kuti, keeping politics close to the heart. But they have their own approach, throwing in environmental consciousness (they tour in a bus that runs on vegetable oil) and a female lead singer, Lara Maykovich, the co-founder of the group. April 25: **Hugh Masekela.** Nearly forty years after "Grazing in the Grass" topped the R. & B. charts, the South African soul-jazz master still knows how to get a crowd to its feet, and keep it there.

**THEATRE AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN**

Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—April 20: The sixth annual **Jammys** kick off the inaugural run of the Green Apple Music & Arts Festival. (See above.) The Grateful Dead drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann top a bill of some three dozen musicians, including Stephen and Ky-Mani Marley, Charlie Musselwhite, Peter Frampton, Richie Havens, and Baaba Maal, who are gathering to offer thanks to the gods of improvisation. April 21: The indefatigable pop-rap act the **Black Eyed Peas.** The burlesque vixens the **Pussycat Dolls** bare their midriffs to open the show. April 24: The legendary singer and irascible Belfast native **Van Morrison** heads deep into the back hills of American country music with his latest album of covers, "Pay the Devil."

**TONIC**

107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—April 21: The **Spires That in the Sunset Rise,** a riveting all-female quartet from Chicago, play dark folk-tinged melodies full of unexpected dissonances. The band members shift constantly between a wide variety of instruments, including harp, guitar, cello, drums, harmonium, banjo, spike fiddle, and bells, and, like sisters (in fact, two of them are sisters), the Spires seem to share a secret form of communication. Also on the bill is the Brooklyn-based ensemble **Barbez,** whose gothic cabaret takes listeners deep into the imaginary recesses of Eastern Europe. April 23: **Brewed by Noon,** which is led by the drummer Sean Noonan and features the Senegalese bassist and vocalist Thierno Camara and the guitarists Aram Bajakian and Jon Madof, couples progressive jazz with African rhythms. The group just finished recording its second album, "N.Y.," with the help of Marc Ribot, Mat Maneri, Abdoulaye Diabate, and Susan McKeown. Here the bassist and free-funk prophet Jamaaladeen Tacuma, who's played with Ornette Coleman's Prime Time (and more recently with the Philadelphia hip-hop group the Roots), adds heat to an already potent mix.

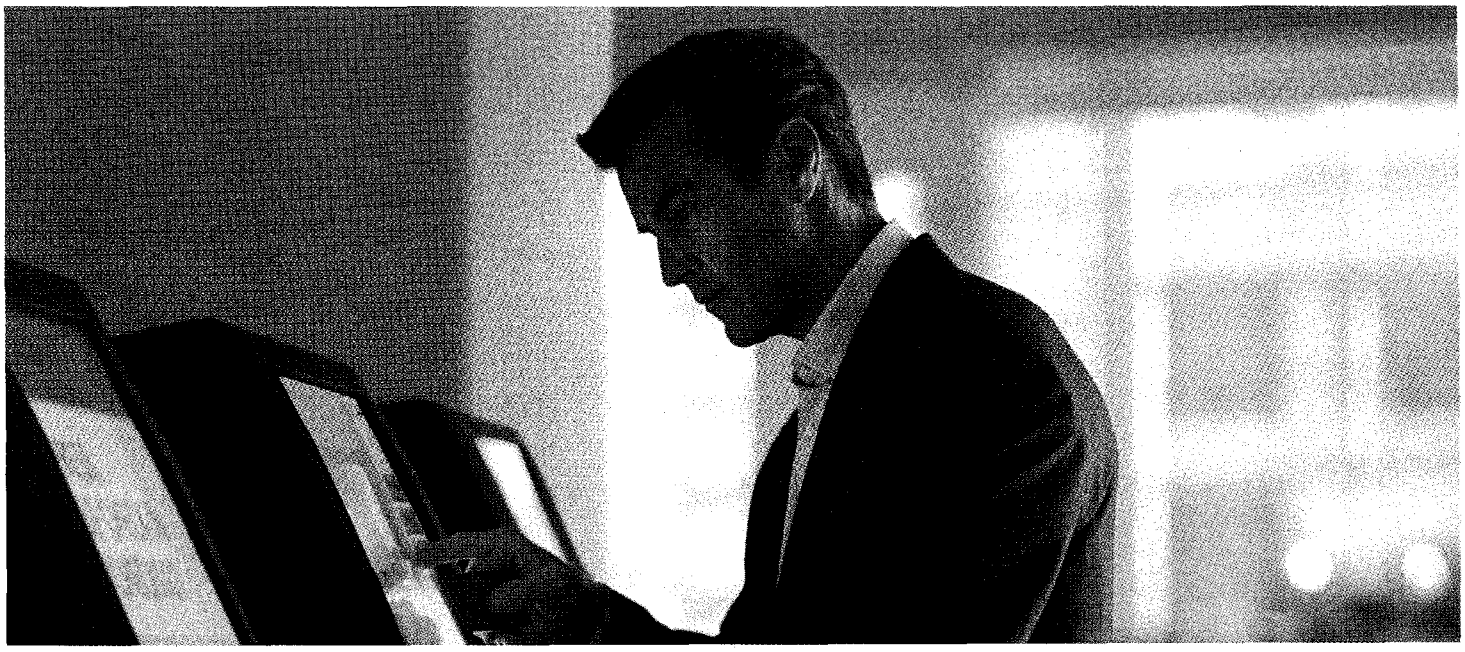
**WEBSTER HALL**

125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—April 20: The English export **Elbow** plays sincere and expansive pop full of drawn-out vocals and tortured lyrics. April 22: The **Dresden Dolls,** a theatrical Boston-based duo, come to town with a new album full of songs about everything from sex-change operations to hotel minibars. The piano-and-drum combo mixes Weimar-era aesthetics (pancake makeup and bowlers) with angst-drenched lyrics and fearsome percussion. Before the band took off, Amanda Palmer, the group's pianist and main songwriter, used to mesmerize crowds in Harvard Square as an eight-foot living statue clad in a wedding gown. Though no longer silent, she's every bit as towering and hypnotic on stage.

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

**ALGONQUIN HOTEL**

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 13: The chanteuse **Karen Akers** focusses on the



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**BIRDLAND**
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—April 19-21: Stepping out of Manhattan Transfer for a few nights, the singer **Janis Siegel** presents selections from her new album, "A Thousand Beautiful Things," in which she puts a Latin spin on contemporary work by Björk, Suzanne Vega, Paul Simon, and others.

**BLUE NOTE**
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—April 18-23: A double bill with the quartet of **Ron Carter,** jazz's premier bassist, and the effervescent singer **Karrin Allyson,** whose latest release, "Footprints," features classic jazz songs with new lyrics.

**CARLYLE HOTEL**
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—**Mary Cleere Haran,** a great performer who mixes barbed comic observation with genuine scholarly enthusiasm for the creators of the Great American Songbook, takes over the Café Carlyle through April 29.

**DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA**
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—April 18-23: An amalgam of Charlie Parker, Johnny Hodges, and Art Pepper, the saxophonist **Frank Morgan** has a luscious tone and an authentic bebop sensibility. His quartet here is fronted by the pianist **John Hicks.**

**FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY**
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—April 18-29: The glamorous actress **Diahann Carroll** may have had a high-camp turn in the eighties television series "Dynasty," but her musical experience stretches back decades. She made her Broadway début in the 1954 production of Harold Arlen and Truman Capote's "House of Flowers," and she won a Tony Award in 1962 for her role in Richard Rodgers's show "No Strings." This is her first New York club appearance in forty years.

**IRIDIUM**
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—April 20-23: The guitarist **Pat Martino's** biggest influence is Wes Montgomery. On Martino's new album, "Remember," he offers his own takes on "Road Song," "West Coast Blues," and other Wes classics.

**JAZZ STANDARD**
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—April 18-20: **David Liebman.** The prodigious saxophonist's quartet has two long-term members, the guitarist **Vic Juris** and the bassist **Tony Marino,** who, after a decade of collaboration, can virtually read their leader's serpentine thoughts. April 21-23: **Richie Cole** and the **Alto Madness Orchestra.** Once the fastest altoist in town, Cole resurfaces to reclaim his bebop crown.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—April 18-23 and April 25-30: The subtly commanding and influential guitar stylist **Bill Frisell** keeps countless musical ensembles in the air at once. His compact quartet with **Greg Tardy** on saxophone and **Ron Miles** on trumpet is among his most satisfying. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

**ZEBULON**
258 Wythe Ave., between Metropolitan Ave. and N. 3rd St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-218-6934)—April 19: A blend of stories and songs from Polly Cotton, which features **Shelley Hirsch,** who has been called a "woman of a thousand voices," and the Swiss composer and pianist **Simon Ho** (a.k.a. Hostettler). April 23: The saxophonist **Michael Blake's** group Free Association is his longest-running ensemble; it's filled with stellar improvisers. April 24: **Ron Miles.** The Denver trumpeter and composer, taking a busman's holiday during a two-week engagement at the Village Vanguard with Bill Frisell, hits Brooklyn with a quintet of his own.

## ART
## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and forgotten items from the Met's storerooms meet in what Kara Walker calls "the story of Muck." This sad and delicate show, titled **"After the Deluge,"** mixes Walker's own gruesomely satirical silhouettes, gouaches, and writings with a range of historical works to produce a meditation on death by water and the indelible stain of American racial obsessions. Through July 30. ♦ **"Samuel Palmer: Vision and Landscape."** A major retrospective, co-organized with the British Museum, reviews the work of the Romantic-era landscape painter Samuel Palmer (1805-81). Through May 29. ♦ **"A Taste for Opulence: Sèvres Porcelain from the Collection."** Through Aug. 13. ♦ **"Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh."** Through July 9. ♦ **"The Fabric of Life: Ikat Textiles of Indonesia."** Through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet."** Through July 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul"** is the first American museum retrospective of the Norwegian artist (1863-1944) in thirty years. Through May

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## CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
## THE LAST DON

The final new productions of Joseph Volpe's long reign as the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera have dramatized the need for a changing of the guard. First came a staging of Tchaikovsky's "Mazeppa" that amounted to a garish disaster—Russian history filtered through Las Vegas surrealism. (Operagoers will not soon forget, no matter how hard they try, the sight of Olga Guryakova, as Maria, running around in circles with her father's severed head.) Now playing is a quaintly appointed, overstuffed "Don Pasquale" that already looks as though it had been gathering dust in the warehouse for years. Otto Schenk's direction is too frantic, but the singers have fun. Anna Netrebko lavishes her creamy tone and sly smile on the character of Norina, tripping over the fioritura here and there. Juan Diego Flórez lends his athletic elegance to Ernesto; Simone Alaimo amiably barks the title role. The brilliant Polish baritone Mariusz Kwiecien, singing Dr. Malatesta, appears to be auditioning subliminally for the part of Don Giovanni (sign him up). The Volpe era concludes with a gala on May 20: lots of stars, no pretense of theatre.

—*Alex Ross*

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

8. ♦ In **"Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking,"** artists from Islamic backgrounds examine their cultures and homelands, mostly from afar. Unexpectedly, perhaps, women reign. Included are works by Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat, Ghada Amer, Shahzia Sikander, Shirazeh Houshiary, Emily Jacir, and Marjane Satrapi. Through May 22. ♦ The retrospective **"John Szarkowski: Photographs"** presents work by the critic and curator (he worked at MOMA for almost thirty years), from Midwestern scenes of the nineteen-forties through a 2002 shot taken in upstate New York. Through May 15. ♦ **"On-Site: New Architecture in Spain."** Through May 1. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"David Smith: A Centennial."** Smith (1906-65) parlayed his experiences as a welder, an employee of the Studebaker company, a painter, and an acolyte of the Cubist movement into tremendous steel sculptures that were championed by Clement Greenberg and have become emblems of American modernism. Through May 14. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—Philippe Vergne and Chrissie Iles curated **"Day for Night,"** the 2006 Biennial. More than a hundred artists are represented, including Pierre Huyghe, Marilyn Minter, Sturtevant, and Troy Brauntuch. Through May 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

**BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART**
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"William Wegman: Funney/Strange."** This major retrospective goes beyond clever, anthropomorphic photographs of Weimaraners (though those are here, too) with forty years of the artist's paintings, drawings, videos, and films. Through May 28. ♦ **"Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin"** traces the discoveries and influence of the great naturalist (1809-82) with, among other things, a re-creation of his study, samples of fossils he collected, and live specimens of tortoises, frogs, and iguanas like those that he encountered in the Galápagos Islands. Through Aug. 20. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter"** is back for the eighth year. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

**ASIA SOCIETY**
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Asia Society, which celebrates the occasion with **"A Passion for Asia: The Rockefeller Family Collects,"** a show honoring its patrons. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

**DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART**
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—**"Stories to Tell: Masterworks from the Kelly Collection of American Illustration."** Through May 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

**FRICK COLLECTION**
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Goya's Last Works."** Through May 14. ♦ The Frick is effecting a rare reunion of the five large-scale allegorical paintings by Paolo Veronese (1528-88) currently in American museums. Two already reside at the Frick; the others travelled from the Met and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Through July 16. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5. The Goya exhibition galleries will stay open until 8 on Friday evenings for the duration of the show.)

**INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY**
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography."** Through May 28. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

**MUSEO DEL BARRIO**
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—**"Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Early Impressions."** Through May 21. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

**MUSEUM OF BIBLICAL ART**
Broadway at 61st St. (212-408-1500)—**"This Anguished World of Shadows: Georges Rouault's Miserere et Guerre."** Rouault was born in 1871, in a basement where his mother took refuge during the violent last days of the Paris Commune. Throughout his life, he meditated on the sufferings of ordinary people during wartime, specifically in his print series "Miserere et Guerre," executed in two parts during and after the First World War. The fifty-eight aquatint, drypoint, and heliogravure images, presented here with several oil studies in color, exemplify what Rouault called "outrageous lyricism." The through-line of the series is Christ's passion, interspersed with brooding, expressionistic portraits of workers, soldiers, mothers, mourners, and the artist's iconic, dementedly grinning kings. Through May 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

**MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Transformed by Light: The New York Night,"** an exhibition that considers the impact of electrical lights on city life, whether in office buildings or homes, in neon signs or on the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree. Through May 7. ♦ **"Timescapes"** compresses four hundred years of New York City history into a twenty-two-minute presentation of morphing maps and archival photographs. It's an absorbing biography of the metropolis, neatly organized into chapters that outline the city's explosion out into its five boroughs, up into skyscrapers, and down into the subway system. Ongoing. ♦ **"On the Couch: Cartoons from The New Yorker"** presents almost eighty years' worth of psychoanalytic humor. Through July 26. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

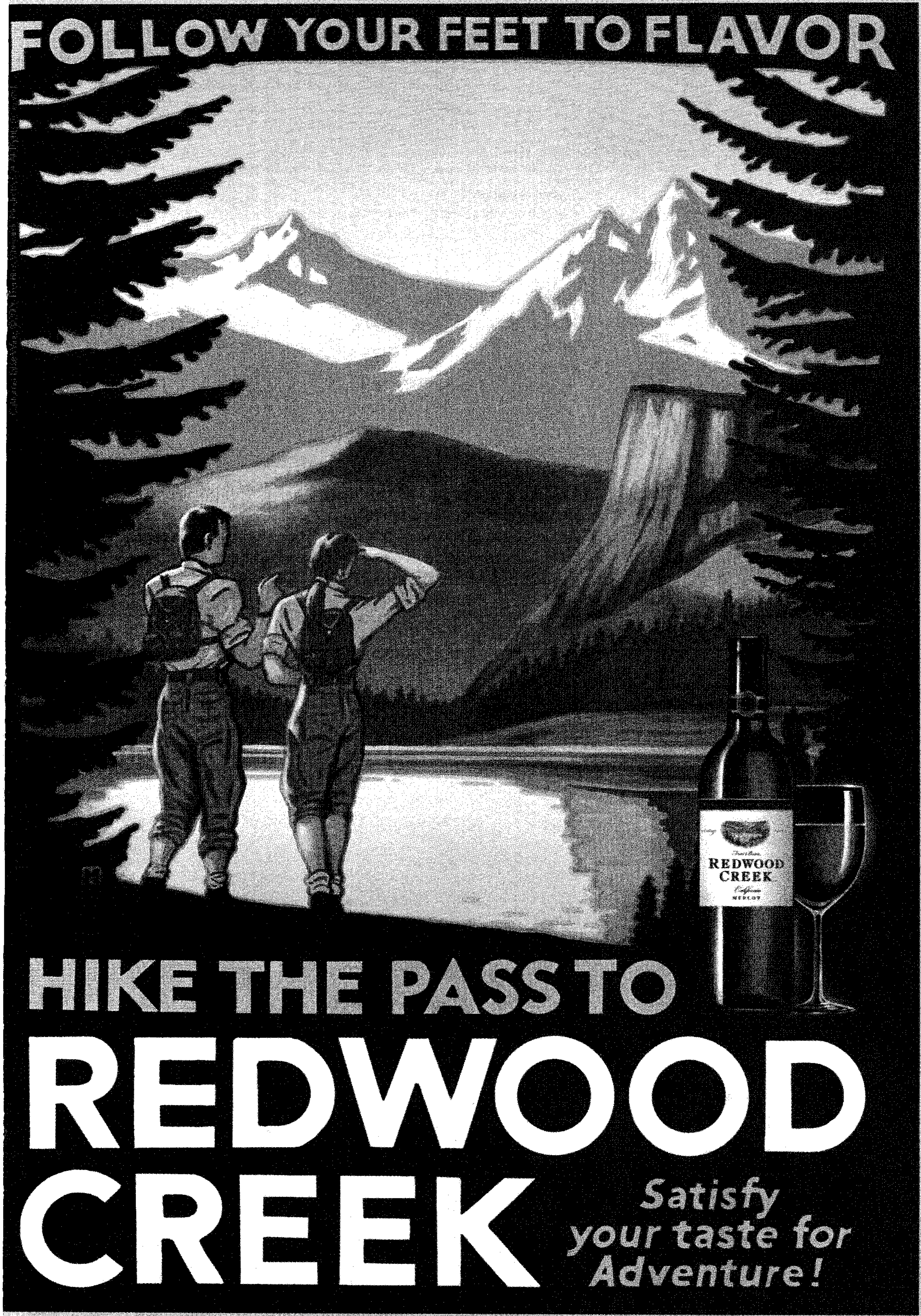
**NEUE GALERIE**
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Klee in America."** Through May 22. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

**RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART**
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—Tantric Buddhism is an ancient spiritual practice inspired by the "crazy wisdom" of ascetic siddhas, those renegade monks and (less frequently) nuns who are described politely as enlightened nonconformists and bluntly as degenerate misfits. **"Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas"** presents these colorful characters in paintings, mandalas, and statues, mostly from Tibet. It does one good to contemplate them. Virupa, "the Ugly One," is famous for having stopped the sun in the sky to avoid paying his bar tab. Tilopa was a pimp, but also the founder of a revered lineage of teachers. Chandragomin, "the Grammarian," was said to bring divine images to life by talking to them. Through Sept. 4. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, 11 to 5, Wednesdays, 11 to 7, Fridays, 11 to 10, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

*Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.*

**JOAN COLOM**
The first American show by this eighty-four-year-old Spanish photographer consists of sixteen small black-and-white pictures of prostitutes and their customers in a Barcelona red-light district. Taken surreptitiously between 1958 and 1961, the photos undercut the furtive, voyeuristic quality of surveillance shots with a sly sense of complicity. In several images, Colom seems to identify with the roguish glances or rude gestures of men, and he clearly enjoys the atmosphere of teasing availability and abandon. More saucy than sleazy, Colom's



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work has a noir romanticism that suggests Robert Frank's Times Square as interpreted by Federico Fellini. Through April 29. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

### *Short List*

**PETER BEGLEY:** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 212-879-6606. Through April 22. **DANNY LYON:** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-750-7070. Through April 22. **SALLY MANN:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313. Through April 22. **EDWARD SOREL:** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 212-838-0333. Through April 22. **CARL VAN VECHTEN:** Cummins, 699 Madison Ave., at 62nd St. 212-688-6441. Through May 6.

## GALLERIES–CHELSEA

**CHANSCHATZ**
The collaborative duo ChanSchatz (Eric Chan and Heather Schatz) began this project by inviting two groups of participants—their meatpacking-district neighbors and soldiers in Iraq—to choose the elements of their art-to-be from several formal menus. Respondents picked color swatches, jewellike geometric shapes, and atmospheric phrases like "expansion in physical space" or "visions of utopia." ChanSchatz put it all together, and had the results screen-printed on silk. Unfortunately, you would never know this to look at the show; the popular consensus evidently favors big, splashy panels that look like blown-up details from computer-generated superhero cartoons. Through April 29. (Audiello, 526 W. 26th St. 212-675-9082.)

**TANJA ALEXIA HOLLANDER / LIGORANO/REESE**
Hollander's show of color photographs of landscapes and sky opens on April 22; on the same day, Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese's ice sculpture of one word—"Democracy"—is installed. The Hollander show is up through May 27; the duration of the Ligarano/Reese project will depend on the temperature, though a portfolio of related images on political themes will be on display through May 13. (Kempner, 501 W. 23rd St. 212-206-6872.)

**RICHARD MISRACH**
In the absence of a career-spanning museum retrospective, "Chronologies," a shrewdly edited, handsomely installed exhibition of landscape work from 1975 to 2004, will have to satisfy Misrach's many fans. Although there are pictures from Egypt and Hawaii, the show underlines the California photographer's passionate commitment to the ruined magnificence of the American West. A contemporary classicist, Misrach photographs sand dunes, mountains, train tracks, and burnished clouds with a reverence that recalls Timothy O'Sullivan and Ansel Adams, but he doesn't overlook the desert's many abandoned nuclear-test sites, rotting livestock dumps, and unexploded mortar shells. Through April 22. (PaceWildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

**JULES OLITSKI**
A sampler of monumental canvases and Corten-steel sculptures from the early seventies shows Olitski as an abstractionist on a heroic scale who gently refuses the heroic part. Gluey and ashen, with streaks of dirty-bright color peeping through, his acrylic impasto quietly deflates the Sturm und Drang of New York School gestures; the rusted curves of his floor-based sculptures glisten with deliberately applied oil, as if to gloss the rawness of the steel, while at the same time enhancing the nested rings' fluidity. Through April 29. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave. 212-563-4474.)

**RONA PONDICK**
Pondick, along with peers like Kiki Smith and Robert Gober, is known for tossing out the grand, romantic model of figurative sculpture and replacing it with something creepier, unnerving, abject. In recent years, she's used her own body as a starting point, blowing up and shrinking fragments cast in stainless steel, and combining them with elements from other organisms to create compositions intermittently comic and macabre. "Crimson Queen Maple" includes tiny buds in the shape of the artist's head; "Azalea" sprouts hands; monkeys with fake-fur and stainless-steel bottoms and a cartoony rat also wear the artist's face. The juxtapositions and use of scale are always imaginative, but sometimes just a hairsbreadth away from kitsch. Through April 22. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018.)

**TOBIAS REHBERGER**
Unlike music or dance, sculpture and painting lead a double life as consumer durables. Rehberger confronts this bogey head on with objects that blur the boundaries between art and industrial design. Here, a boat transformed into a giant sculpture takes over the gallery, its original purpose obscured by a coat of dark-green paint and, of course, the context. The title, "American Traitor Bitch," is unfortunate, and the back story regarding his Vietnamese boat-person collaborator is distracting. But duck under the stern and straighten up through a cutout square on the boat's underside and you'll emerge in an entirely different world: a warm, wood-panelled room that's like a mini-cathedral hidden inside the austere, minimalist mass. Through April 22. (Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467.)

**SISLEJ XHAFA**
The Kosovar artist Xhafa presents three works united under the comic, threatening title "When Mac Goes Black." Object one is a wall-mounted sculpture in mahogany, suggestive of an enormous police nightstick or a streamlined phallic totem. Object two is a gray-on-gray acrylic painting in which one can just discern the punning phrase "If you see something, say something." Object three is an elegant side table on which rests a human skull wearing a plumed red carnival mask. Weaponry, viruses (the black Mac), and plagues (as in Red Death) coalesce to make a rebuslike statement that's pithier in recollection than face to face. Through April 29. (Lambert, 564 W. 25th St. 212-242-3611.)

### *Short List*

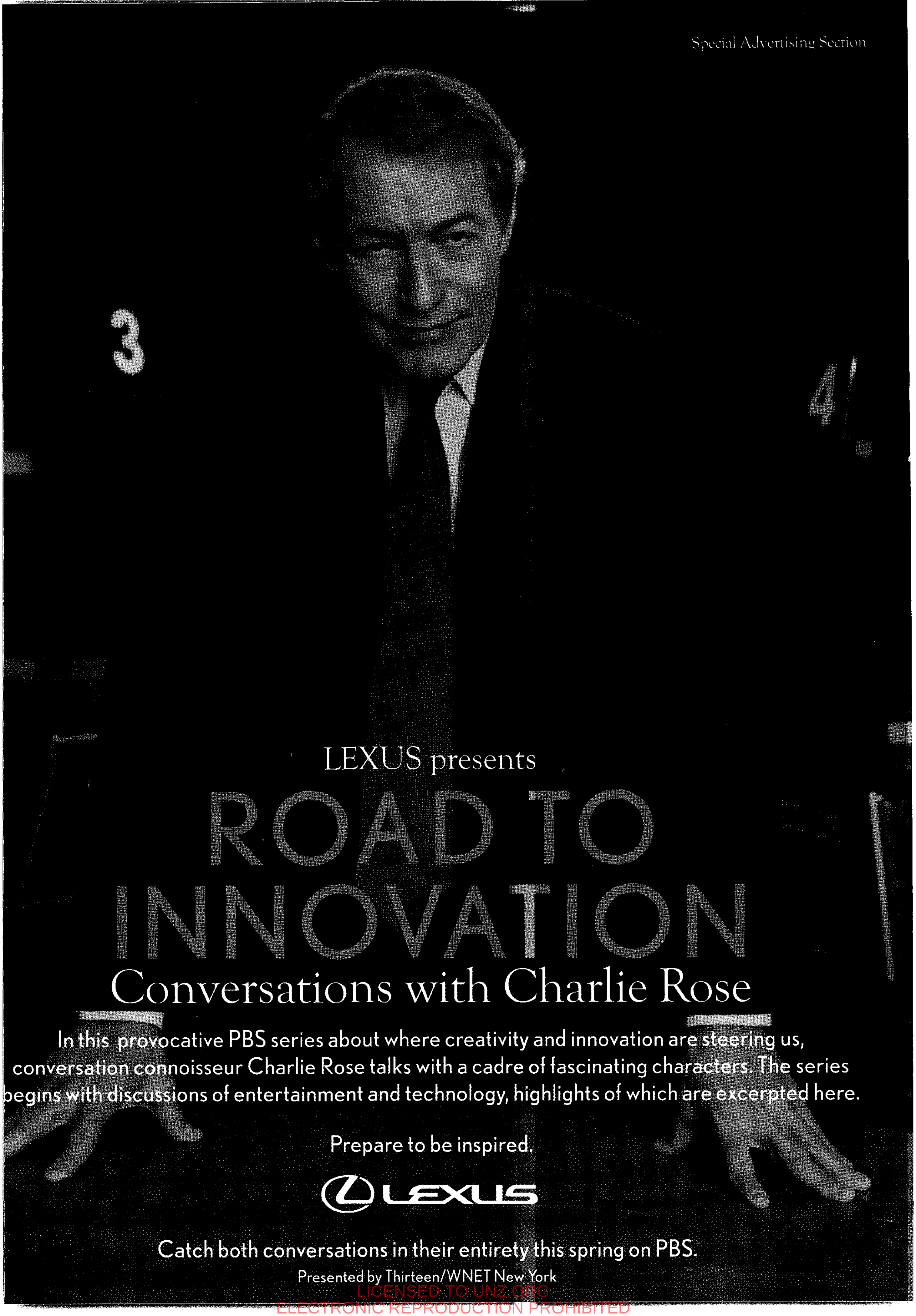
**TARA DONOVAN:** PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-929-7000. Through April 22. **NAN GOLDIN:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through April 22. **JUDITH LINHARES:** Thorp, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-691-6565. Through April 22. **SCOTT PETERMAN:** Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930. Through April 22. **PAOLO VENTURA:** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through May 20. **"REGENERATION: 50 PHOTOGRAPHERS OF TOMORROW":** Aperture, 547 W. 27th St. 212-505-5555. Through June 22.

*"Abandoned Housewife," by Marla Rutherford, in a group show at Aperture.*

**SUSIE ROSMARIN**
Digital imaging has not been kind to old-fashioned, hand-plotted Op art. Rosmarin's new paintings are quite amazing when one considers the mind-bending exertions in color-mapping and tape-masking necessary to create these flickering, buzzing grids of gaudy pinks, hot greens, and electric blues. Her references are to broadcast test patterns, gingham cloth, and other humble analogs—but unless you've got your nose pressed to the weft of the canvas, it's all too easy to assume computer assistance and turn away. Paradoxically, work meant to be seen vibrating from across the room compels most in immediate closeup. Through April 22. (Danese, 535 W. 24th St. 212-223-2227.)

## GALLERIES–QUEENS

**"FLUXBOX"**
Flux Factory offers a taste of authentic contemporary bohemianism, with a collective of seventeen-odd artists living in a warrenlike loft near the railroad tracks (and next to a Korean mega-church) and creating work together. The current project, "FluxBox," is a room-size music box that uses homemade and found instruments—everything from an old boot striking wood to an accordion suspended from the ceiling—to tinkle,



LEXUS presents

# ROAD TO INNOVATION

## Conversations with Charlie Rose

In this provocative PBS series about where creativity and innovation are steering us, conversation connoisseur Charlie Rose talks with a cadre of fascinating characters. The series begins with discussions of entertainment and technology, highlights of which are excerpted here.

Prepare to be inspired.

LEXUS

Catch both conversations in their entirety this spring on PBS.

Presented by Thirteen/WNET New York

**Presented by LEXUS**

# TOPIC#1: ENTERTAINMENT Charlie Rose asks George Clooney and Michael Eisner what will fuel the entertainment industry in the next ten years.

**Charlie Rose: Are we getting to a point in the film business where technology drives content?**
**Michael Eisner:** Content is still going to be the most important part of the entertainment business. And there's a great history in this country of content. You can watch big, bubble-gum, wonderful entertainment or you can watch *Jarhead* or *Syriana*. People like George Clooney are really doing amazing things. I don't know where all these people are coming from who end up on Hollywood Boulevard being directors. There is a diversity in this country that creates this kind of creative angst. It works.

**George Clooney:** Technology gives us a chance to play with the medium. For instance, we thought it would be interesting to understand what lobbyists and consultants do. We found the best way to do that was to operate five hidden digital cameras, and use real people. We did it again with *Unscripted* for HBO. Because a lot is improvised, you're actually writing in an editing room.

> "The next wave is these kids with digital cameras..."

**CR: Speaking of digital cameras, what about all these kids running around with handhelds?**
**GC:** That's the next wave. We're getting to a place in the film industry where a little romantic comedy will have to make $250 million to break even. What's more, a writer writes a screenplay and by the time it goes through the process and gets to be made, so many of the edges are knocked off. I think the next wave is these kids with digital cameras who are going to have these wild ideas for a screenplay. They may show us something we haven't seen yet.

**CR: And these films will be on television, in theaters, everywhere.**
**GC:** Start with the Internet. Once there are digital theaters, you'll press a button and you'll have downloaded a film into 300 theaters across the country.

**ME:** Or maybe the film will be on an iPod or on the billion cell phones that are being sold this year around the world. The avenues of distribution and exhibition of movies, whether they're in the home or on a Dick Tracy watch, are improving.

**CR: In what other ways is the Internet changing the world of entertainment?**
**ME:** In every way imaginable – in the ability to look at clips and trailers, to do research, aggregate information, view product.

I think, too, that the Internet will revive Walt Disney and Chuck Jones and Hanna Barbera – people who worked in the 30's in those seven- and eight-minute pieces.

Then there's the public content, which is another source of finding professionals. You'll have places on the Internet where you can look at 10,000 kids' student films. You'll see the student films of George Lucas, or Steven Spielberg, or John Lasseter – the Pixar genius. We won't have to find some exotic place where a few students get to show their films. They'll be all over the Internet in user-generated material.

**CR: Is the motion picture business learning from what happened to the music business?**
**ME:** We'll never learn completely. The fact is, with the broadband and digital revolution and the speed at which things can be sent, you can distribute one movie 20 times faster. The kid who today downloads *Good Night, And Good Luck* to his computer and wakes eight hours later to it will have it in eight minutes. It will go to 3 ½ billion people because every nook and cranny in the world will be able digitally to get movies and television shows. So there's going to be a period of uncertainty, of difficulty, of bubbles bursting. And the end result will be an unbelievably strong movie, record, and television industry – in no more than ten and possibly in five or six years.

**CR: What say you about the personalization of music and entertainment?**
**ME:** It's the reason Google is at $400 a share. There is a giant demand for personalization and home entertainment. But there is just as big a place for a movie theater, a show. I think the digital revolution and the home entertainment systems only create a greater appetite for community entertainment.

**GC:** People still like a collective. They like to go somewhere and laugh and be scared and share that. It's an event.

**This conversation airs in March on PBS stations nationwide. Check local listings.**

# TOPIC #2: TECHNOLOGY Charlie discusses innovation and the new dynamics that will be at play in our world with Verizon CEO Ivan Siedenberg and Google CEO Dr. Eric Schmidt.

**Charlie Rose: In five years, what will technology at home look like? Where is wireless in the pantheon of the future?**
**Ivan Siedenberg:** The way we see it, anything that's related to voice, simple data, and human interaction will be transferred to your cell phone or mobile device. Three or five years out, you'll have two or three HDTV channel sets in your house. You'll want ten megabits of capacity for your computer. You'll want upstream capacity to send information the same way you have downstream capacity.

**CR: Will the cellphone replace the laptop?**
**IS:** The cell phone will replace the functionality of certain things, but it won't replace the whole thing. I don't see people walking around with TVs on their belts or in their purses.

**CR: Define the moment in terms of technology.**
**IS:** It's the moment to scale more quickly, and get the services deployed quickly. In 1991, there might have been five million wireless customers across the whole country. Now, there are 160 million. Internet protocol, mobility is where we're going. So we invest in bandwidth, glass (optical fibers).

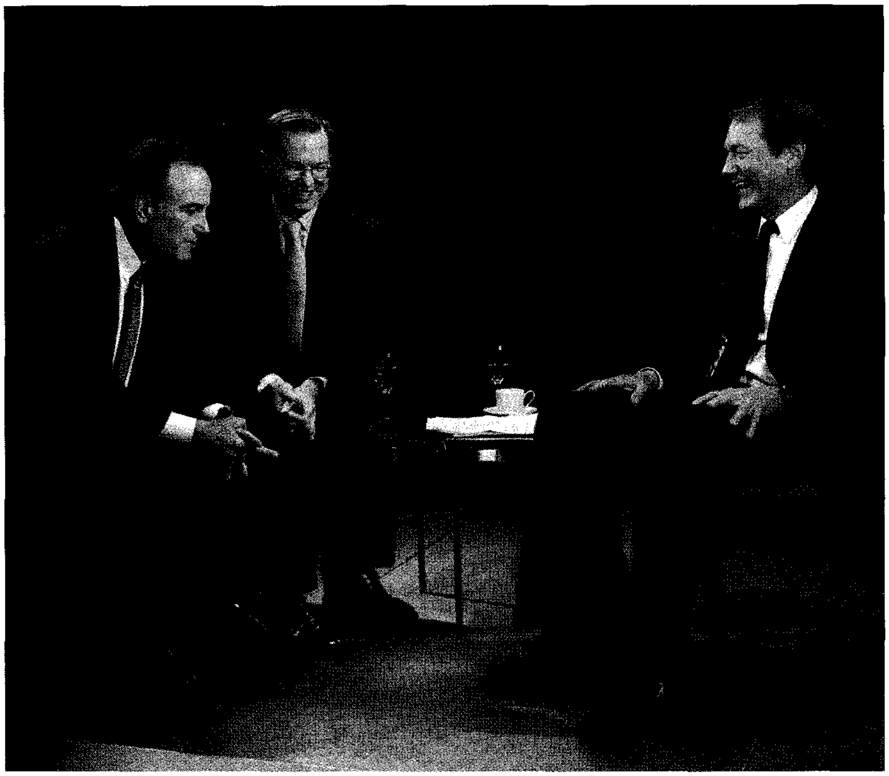
> "I don't see people walking around with TVs on their belts or in their purses."

**CR: What is your goal going forward?**
**Eric Schmidt:** We want to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible. Most of it is still not available to you. People haven't figured out a way to copy it from the archival technologies onto new digital forms. Or it's hidden behind locks and firewalls. In many cases, people would like to sell it, and we have to find ways to partner with them.

There's a tremendous amount of information that's not in traditional sources, but in people's heads. Look at the phenomenon of Wikipedia. Wikipedia has roughly 50,000 contributors and more than two million pages in a hundred different languages. Surveys indicate that it's as accurate as Encyclopædia Britannica, which means it has some errors, but the errors get fixed more quickly on Wikipedia because there are so many contributors. They make changes every second.

Google currently gives you 10 or 20 answers. We want to give you the perfect, exact, right answer, and we want to do it on mobile devices. We want to give much more information, much more accurate results, and many more types of information. You know, viewers can now use Google Search to find past episodes of *The Charlie Rose Show.*

**IS:** Great companies like Google create new markets, new industries. We want to be a company that will help create something different. We're taking fiber optics right into any room in your home. The technology wasn't quite ready for that until now. We're taking down all of the entry barriers for anybody who writes code or software, because we'll now have much more bandwidth and the capacity to deliver it to the desktop or mobile device. We're not trying to complete your call today; we're trying to create a delivery system that gives you unlimited capability on either end. We want to bring 50 to 100 megabits of capacity into any fixed terminal in the home. Our core competency is deploying technology and running networks to create synergies. We can't predict the new services that creative people will develop to use over these networks.



> "We can't predict the new services that creative people will develop to use over these networks."

**CR: Tell me about the advertising.**
**ES:** The advertising is a mission-critical sales function. Estimates have the advertising market between $500 and $700 billion worldwide – per year. Roughly half of that is in the U.S. A lot is on television and radio and in direct marketing. Internet advertising is somewhere between one and two percent of that market, depending on how you count. It is a very big growth business. Furthermore, the technology that's being used in advertising has not changed very much in 10 or 20 years. In the television world, the biggest change has been the arrival of Tivo and set-top boxes. Radio, again, not very different from 20, 30, 40 years ago. We believe that technology can be used to improve the effectiveness of advertising. People find ads useful if they're actually trying to buy something. But you have to show them the right ad! It's about relevance and accuracy and measurement. The reason we've been so successful is that we can

go to the vice president of sales in a company and say we can show you who's buying your product because they click on the ads.

**CR: Has the technological and Internet revolution been driven more by software or hardware?**
ES: It's really both. Twenty years ago, the kinds of things that Google does today weren't possible because the computers weren't fast enough. A fast network cost thousands of dollars a month. Now it costs $10 or $20. People like Ivan have spent years building this amazing worldwide infrastructure. Then, it was a hardware game. Now, it's a software game. Ivan's building the highways; I'm building the stores and movie theaters.

> **"The acceleration is going to be breathtaking."**

IS: Google is a market-maker. People are always looking for new ways to use technology. Companies like Google will create those new ways. We think we're in a spot where, if we invest in wireless or invest in glass, optical fibers, we can create new growth which means that, sure, we'll take some of cable's current business, but we'll create new businesses as well.

**CR: What of affordability issues, and what we once called "the digital divide?"**
ES: The good news is that we're in a rapidly declining cost industry.

IS: We deploy so we can scale. People in Roxbury or South Philly or Shaker Heights spend the same amount on communications. So, all the markets are ripe to deploy. If we create the most cost-efficient network, we serve every market. And you can achieve the quickest scale where you have houses every 50 feet so you can run fiber down the street and get it in efficiently.

**CR: Where will we see the most growth?**
ES: Most people believe the majority of the growth in mobile and Internet will be in China and India over the next 20 years. Nothwithstanding what's called the "great firewall of China," the Internet revolution is happening there – more than 100 million Internet users, more than 400 million mobile phone users, and the growth rates are enormously faster than in the U.S. Many of the world's top programmers come from China and India. It appears they're the two largest untapped resources of technology and brilliant people.

**CR: How do you foster innovation?**
IS: Innovation to us comes with sticking to what we do well and then creating synergies. We're moving to where the people think the growth is. We're a company of grinders.

ES: Hiring better and better talent. The very best people want to work where their skills are appreciated. Twenty percent of Google employees' time is free to do whatever they want. That time generates almost all our new ideas.

**CR: What are the forces driving innovation forward?**
ES: People coming out of graduate schools have these amazing visions of what they can do with technology. There's enough venture capital now to build very large companies very quickly. It's amazing to me that one or two people out of Stanford seem to find that idea, get their friends together, get some money, and change the world.

The most interesting things right now are the communities of people being built on top of information and devices. An awful lot of people find each other on the Net, form communities, and create user-generated content. The next generation of leaps in technology will come from the fact that people are always connected and sharing information. Somebody says I've invented this, another says I've invented that, and they connect. The acceleration is going to be breathtaking.

LEXUS

**This conversation airs in April on PBS stations nationwide. Check local listings.**

**The innovative RX400h hybrid pairs a powerful V6 gas engine with a dazzling electric motor, to bring you the power of a V8. Giving more to the driver, while taking less from the world.**

wheeze, and bellow out versions of one simple tune (written by the project's organizer, Stefany Anne Golberg). The effect is somewhere between Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau* and Tim Hawkinson's sculptural constructions, without the novelty of Schwitters's found objects or the artless sophistication of Hawkinson's machines. Through April 29. (Flux Factory, 38-38 43rd St., Long Island City. 718-707-3362.)

## DANCE

**NEW YORK CITY BALLET**

Sprinkled into the company's spring repertory season are seven premières commissioned for the "Diamond Project," Peter Martins's showcase of new choreography. All but two of the choreographers have made ballets for the company before, but it will be intriguing to see what Alexei Ratmansky (the director of the Bolshoi), Mauro Bigonzetti (the director of the super-energetic Italian modern-dance company Aterballetto), and, of course, Christopher Wheeldon have come up with. April 25 at 7:30: The season opens with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Balanchine's lush interpretation of Shakespeare and Mendelssohn, his first original evening-length ballet for the company. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 25.)

**"SOURCING STRAVINSKY"**

Six choreographers respond to the great modernist composer. Yvonne Rainer, a key founder of the Judson Dance Theatre, who has choreographed very little since she switched to film thirty years ago, dives right in, boldly pushing the extremities of Balanchine's "Agon" to further extremes with an all-female quartet—Sally Silvers, Pat Catterson, Patricia Hoffbauer, and Emily Coates. David Neumann, working with a live pianist and a mezzo-soprano, plays with time and duration, alternating music visualization with chance procedures. Dayna Hanson and Linas Phillips mine found and original video footage to create a fake documentary juxtaposing Stravinsky's affluence with American homelessness. Cynthia Hopkins takes off from a never-realized collaboration between Stravinsky and Dylan Thomas, and Rennie Harris fashions a B-boy ballet from an excerpt of "The Rite of Spring." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. April 19-22 at 7:30.)

**"RED TIDE BLOOMING"**

In his first full-length group show, Taylor Mac joins forces with other like-minded artists, such as the satirical burlesque performer Julie Atlas Muz (who choreographs here) and the wonderful puppeteer Basil Twist, to create an entertainingly freaky allegory of the evils of gentrification. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. April 19-21 at 8, April 22 at 5 and 8, and April 23 at 5.)

**STEPHEN PETRONIO COMPANY**

Petronio's "Bloom" sets expansive choreography to a score by Rufus Wainwright performed by the Young People's Chorus of New York City, and "Bud Suite" finds lighter, more tender, and sometimes funnier moments between romantic partners in four recent Wainwright songs. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. April 19-22 at 8 and April 23 at 2 and 7:30.)

**PARADIGM**

This troupe, directed by Gus Solomons, Jr., is a place where established older dancers can go when they still have a hankering to perform. In a diverse program of chamber pieces crafted by multiple choreographers, the dancing is understandably earthbound, but it remains fluid, sharp, and, above all, serious. In a recent trio by Solomons, set to Klaus Nomi's rendition of Henry Purcell's elegiac "The Cold Song," Keith Sabado, Dudley Williams, and Michael Blake move in canon, periodically freezing in impassioned, Italianate poses. Paradigm's co-founder, Carmen de Lavallade, reprises her solo "Will's Ladies," and the special guests include Martine Van Hamel. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. April 20-22 at 8:30.)

**"TRAS LADOS"**

The Korean dancer and choreographer Eun Jung Gonzalez has been working with the three dancers of the Mexican troupe Pulso Cía. de Danza for the past year; the result is an exploration of

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## POP NOTES
## MOZ DEF

Morrissey, once the lead singer for the Smiths and now simply his one-named self, is never boring. He sprang up, fully formed, in the early eighties, with a towering quiff of hair, and a generation of smart, self-conscious kids (and adults) hung on his every couplet. Did he mean it when he sang "I am human and I need to be loved, just like everybody else does?," or was he just making fun of humans again? A more pertinent question has dogged Morrissey since he left the Smiths: are the musicians around him ever going to be that good again? After releasing several uneven albums in the early nineties, Morrissey settled into a playing and songwriting relationship with the guitarists Boz Boorer and Alain Whyte. Slowly and steadily, they have established a collaborative band, and **"Ringleader of the Tormentors"** (Attack) is their strongest work yet, possibly because of the new guitarist and co-writer, Jesse Tobias. Morrissey's arch lines are still free of cliché, and his quavering, stagy singing is never the camp shtick it's sometimes taken for. "Ringleader" was produced by Tony Visconti, who oversaw many of David Bowie's nineteen-seventies albums, and the over-all style is aggressive, guitar-based rock. Some of Morrissey's themes have not changed and likely never will: life is mostly a pain in the ass, though it won't necessarily kill you, and love is just another word for pain.

What is different now is that this alleged celibate seems to have left the monastery for a night or two, apparently in Italy. "And now I am walking through Rome and there is no room to move, but the heart feels free" is the last line of "Dear God Please Help Me," a song that may be entirely free of irony, even the line "There are explosive kegs between my legs." Morrissey's melodies are not as nimble and complex as they once were, but each song feels considered, even those that don't live up to the conceit. (The seven-minute-long "Life Is a Pigsty" makes its point about three minutes before it ends.) Morrissey's moments of optimism will never be described as sunny or carefree—"If your God bestows protection upon you and if the U.S.A. doesn't bomb you, I believe I will see you somewhere." This level of adjusted expectation is not surprising. A children's choir joins him for the refrain of "The Youngest Was the Most Loved," which expresses a thought that has never seemed to trouble Morrissey: "There is no such thing in life as normal." He might not have a career if there were.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

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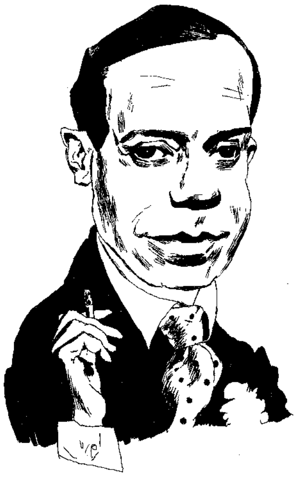
Bodhisattva; China; Tang (618–907), first half of the 8th century; Collection of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Nelson A. Rockefeller bequest, Kykuit. Photo: John Bigelow Taylor

## CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
## GOSSAMER WINGS

The American Poets Program, which has been reprinting Whitman, Millay, Roethke, and the like in stylish, pocket-size editions, has slipped into evening clothes with its new volume of lyrics by Cole Porter. Nearly every Porter song seems to be here, from his 1911 Yale football fight song, "Bull-Dog" ("Bow, wow, wow . . ."), to "Let's Do It, Let's Fall in Love," "Night and Day," and "Just One of Those Things," as well as a forgotten few like "Which?" ("Which is the right life / The simple or the night life?"), though the ninety-two selections are but a sliver of the Master's eight-hundred-plus published tunes. Young readers, following the thread of sex and love and liquored insouciance that thrums and swirls through these pages, will wish themselves older, and oldsters, supplying the absent music with each line, will remember how smart and grownup they felt dancing to this stuff while they whispered the lyrics back and forth with a slim, pliant partner.



—*Roger Angell*

the surrealistic warping of time and memory produced by travel. Five interconnected stories cut backward and forward in time, with intense partnering, floor work, and extended, loose-limbed reaches and slides, set to an ambient score that incorporates voices recounting fragmentary experiences in several languages. (Danspace, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. April 20-23 at 8:30.)

**"E-MERGING AND E-VOLVING"**

Dance audiences know Ayo Janeen Jackson and Erick Montes from their dancing with Bill T. Jones's company, but at Aaron Davis Hall's annual showcase of new work by emerging artists of color, they're two of the thirteen choreographers on a grab-bag program that is part of the "E-Moves" festival. Savion Glover's protégé Marshall Davis, Jr., presents a tap number, Adia Whitaker combines contemporary dance with Haitian traditional dance, and Frankie Martinez blends funk with Afro-Latin social dance. Blade Dance Entertainment serves up hip-hop, while Alysia Ramos offers a fusion of modern and *sabar* with live drumming. (Convent Ave. at 135th St. 212-650-7100. April 21 at 7:30 and April 23 at 3. Through April 29.)

**"PALLADIUM NIGHTS"**

In the nineteen-fifties, some of the most thrilling cross-fertilizations of music and dance to be found in New York took place at the Palladium night club. Ballet Hispanico and Jazz at Lincoln Center's Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra try to re-create that golden era with "Palladium Nights." The choreographer Willie Rosario has schooled the dancers in the authentic "on two" mambo style and has put together an entertaining narrative for eleven broadly drawn characters (the Gossip, the Geek, the Rich Widow, etc.). The musical director, Arturo O'Farrill, fuels the time machine with the right music: that of his father, Chico, who was the Palladium's house composer-arranger. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. April 21-22 at 8. Jazz for Young People: April 22 at noon and 2.)

**YOUTH AMERICA GRAND PRIX GALA**

A jam-packed two-part gala marks the culmination of this ballet competition, which awards scholarships and apprenticeships—and, for one particularly gifted entrant, a contract with the American Ballet Theatre Studio Company—to dancers between the ages of nine and nineteen from twenty countries. The two programs at City Center feature the winners of the contest, followed by a blitz of international stars, including the Royal Ballet's Darcey Bussell and David Makhateli in the passionate central pas de deux from "Manon," and the dashing Igor Zelensky, of the Kirov. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. April 22 at 7 and April 23 at 3.)

**"E-STABLISHED"**

The headlining attraction at Aaron Davis Hall's "E-Moves" festival is a double bill of work by the Bronx's Arthur Aviles and Cynthia Oliver. Aviles set his new dance-text-video collage, "¡Mi Celia! ¡Mi Puente!," to popular Latin jazz of the nineteen-fifties, the era when his parents, who were determined not to teach their kids their native Spanish, arrived in New York. Aviles makes the fingers, hands, and arms propel the movement; in one of a series of accompanying man-on-the-street videos, he teaches playground kids to move in the same way. Oliver's COCo Dance Theatre presents "Closer Than Skin," a chain of interwoven solos, duets, and trios in an intimate mood. (Convent Ave. at 135th St. 212-650-7100. April 22 at 7:30. Through April 30.)

## CLASSICAL MUSIC
## OPERA

**METROPOLITAN OPERA**

April 19 at 8 and April 22 at 1:30: The Met's version of **"Le Nozze di Figaro,"** a busy but effective production conceived by Jonathan Miller, has become a house favorite. This run is distinctive not only for its wise and elegant Countess, Soile Isokoski, but also for a new Cherubino, Alice Coote, whose voice has been compared to that of her teacher, Janet Baker. Also with the excellent Andrea Rost, Peter Mattei, and John Relyea; Mark Wigglesworth conducts. ♦ April 20 and April 24 at 7: Robert Wilson's famously static production of **"Lohengrin,"** bathed continually in deep-blue light, embraces rather than relieves Wagner's glacial sense of pacing. Some love it and some hate it, but the lead singers—Karita Mattila and Ben Heppner—should bring enough glory to the stage to keep everyone happy; Philippe Auguin. ♦ April 21 at 8: **"Don Pasquale,"** Otto Schenk's swan-song production for the Met, is an entertaining and vocally high-powered romp that features Anna Netrebko, Mariusz Kwiecien, Simone Alaimo, and Juan Diego Flórez; Maurizio Benini conducts a swift and knowing performance. ♦ April 25 at 7:30: With Barry Banks replacing Flórez and Derrick Inouye replacing Benini. ♦ April 22 at 8: Deborah Voigt, adding her name to a list that includes Callas, Tebaldi, and Behrens, takes up the title role in **"Tosca"** for the first time at the Met. Marcello Giordani and James Morris are Cavaradossi and Scarpia, respectively; Carlo Rizzi. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

**NEW YORK CITY OPERA**

The spring season comes to a close. April 19 at 7:30 and April 22 at 8: Jonathan Eaton's production of **"Carmen,"** Bizet's *opus optimum*, elegantly reflects the opera's psychological shades of warmth and coolness, from its sun-washed Seville porticoes to its cavernous, garnet-draped tavern. Kate Aldrich, an up-and-coming mezzo-soprano, takes the title role, sharing the stage with Melanie Vaccari, Robert Breault, and Michael Chioldi; George Manahan conducts. ♦ April 20 at 7:30 and April 22 at 1:30: A revival of Mark Lamos's admired production of Handel's **"Acis and Galatea,"** a masquelike, aristocratic entertainment that holds the stage because of its tender humanity and lyrical touch. Sarah Jane McMahon and Philippe Castagner take the title roles; Ransom Wilson, making his début, conducts. ♦ April 21 at 8: The Harold Prince production of **"Don Giovanni,"** featuring Claudia Waite, Caroline Worra, Timothy Kuhn, Jason Grant, and Brian Anderson; Steven Mosteller. ♦ April 23 at 1:30: **"La Bohème,"** with Yunah Lee, Jennifer Black, Eric Fennell, and Philip Torre; David Wroe. (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

**DICAPO OPERA: "SUSANNAH"**

Carlisle Floyd's American classic, a twentieth-century treatment of the Biblical story of Susannah and the Elders shot through with the words and sounds of the composer's Southern heritage, receives six performances from Dicapo, New York's third professional opera company. Steven Osgood conducts. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-286-9438. April 21-22 at 8 and April 23 at 4.)

**SALVATORE SCIARRINO'S "LOHENGRIN"**

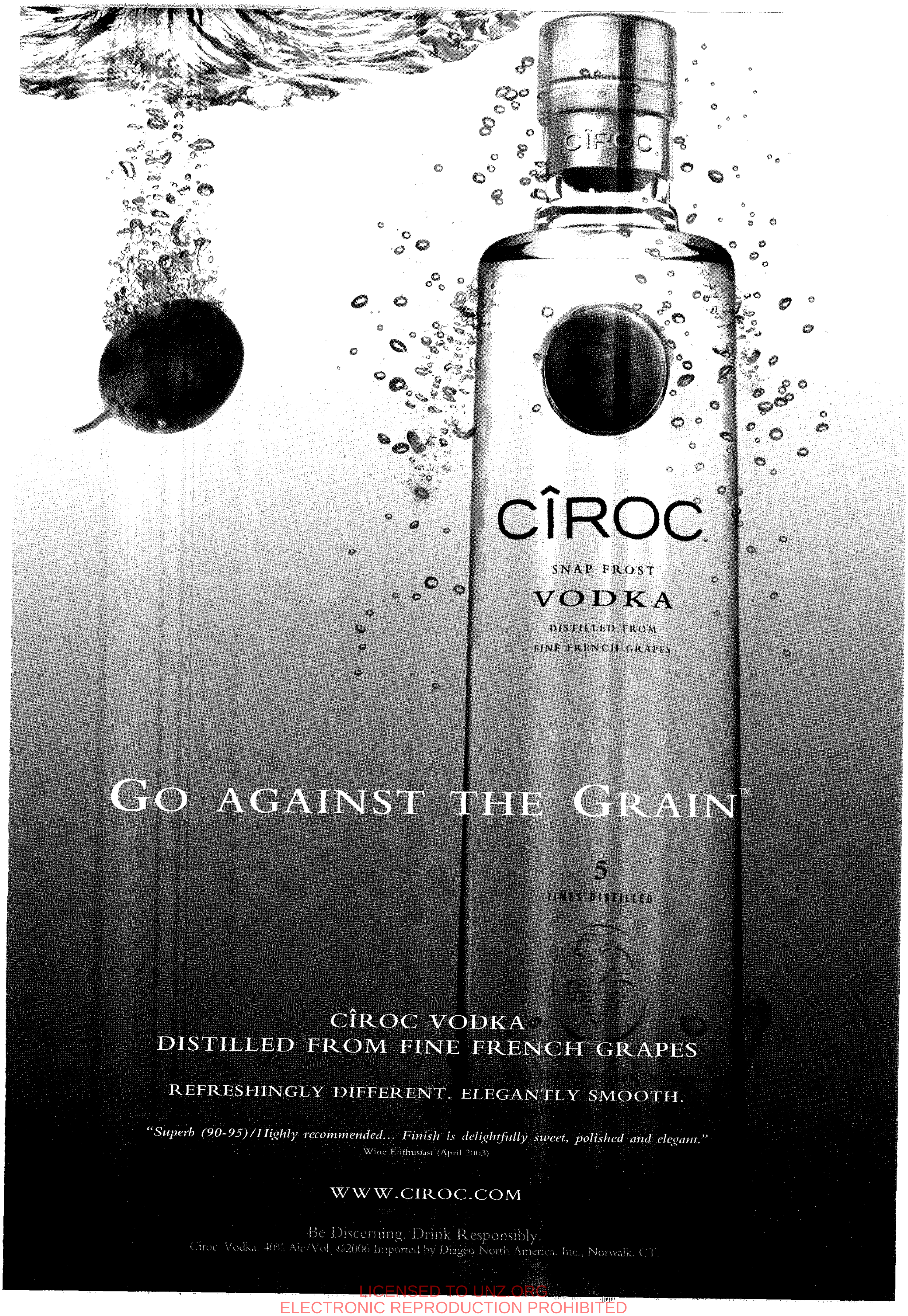
The leading Italian composer, a master of the complex and the macabre, refashions Wagner's Romantic opera into a one-act "invisible action" for soprano and chamber ensemble. Marianne Pousseur sings it; Alan Pierson conducts. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. April 24 at 8.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC**

April 19-20 at 7:30, April 21 at 2, and April 22 at 8: New York's flagship orchestra returns from its Easter break fronted by two musicians of extraordinary power: the violinist Maxim Vengerov, performing Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1, and his mentor, the conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, who concludes the program with the same composer's searing Tenth Symphony. ♦ April 24 and April 26 at 7:30: Hollywood glamour replaces Russian gloom as John Williams conducts a festive program of film music (with clips accompanying some of the excerpts). Two special guests are on hand: Martin Scorsese, who will act as host for a suite of music by Bernard Herr-

ANDY FRIEDMAN



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mann (from such films as "Citizen Kane" and "North by Northwest"), and Steven Spielberg, who will introduce a group of selections from his collaborations with Williams (including "Jaws" and "Schindler's List"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

**SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY**
Michael Tilson Thomas brings his glowing West Coast ensemble to Carnegie Hall. April 19 at 8: Jean-Yves Thibaudet is the guest artist for a program of works by Debussy ("Jeux"), Ravel (the Piano Concerto in G Major), Mahler (the Adagio from the Tenth Symphony), and Wagner. ♦ April 20 at 8: A meet-the-moderns concert features music by Webern (the Six Pieces, Op. 6), Stravinsky ("Petrushka"), and Ives (the "New England Holidays" Symphony, with the Dessoff Symphonic Choir). (212-247-7800.)

**PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA**
The fabulous Philadelphians, a sumptuous ensemble no matter who conducts them, offer Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde," with the tenor Paul Groves, the baritone Thomas Hampson, and their impassioned music director, Christoph Eschenbach. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 21 at 8.)

**CHANTICLEER: "EARTHSONGS"**
Few artists are as beloved at the Metropolitan Museum as the gentlemen of the wonderful San Francisco chorus, whose latest concert is a celebration of nature that includes music by Hindemith, Palestrina, Saint-Saëns, Monteverdi, and Chen Yi. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. April 22 at 8.)

**BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC**
Michael Christie conducts the New York première (in a trimmed-down version) of Heiner Goebbels's "Surrogate Cities," an apocalyptic historical landscape that is also a riveting piece of music theatre. The chanteuse Ute Lemper, the special guest, will leaven the program with selections by Copland, Bernstein, and Kander and Ebb. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. April 22 at 8.)

**MILLER THEATRE: "POCKET CONCERTOS"**
The enterprising George Steel, Miller's impresario and the conductor of the pickup Gotham Sinfonietta, has begun a commissioning program of concertos to fill Columbia University's chamber theatre. The first batch includes works by Benedict Mason, Julia Wolfe (her Accordion Concerto, with the redoubtable Guy Klucevsek), Ichizo Okashiro, and John Musto (the Piano Concerto, with the composer at the keyboard). (Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. April 22 at 8.)

**ORCHESTRA OF THE S.E.M. ENSEMBLE**
Petr Kotik conducts music by three modernist giants: Wolpe (Chamber Piece No. 1), Xenakis ("Palimpsest"), and Feldman ("For Samuel Beckett"). (Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, 31 Mercer St. 718-488-7659. April 24 at 8.)

## RECITALS

**CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER**
April 19 at 7:30: Two of the best young string quartets around—the Pacifica and the Miró—show their stuff in a combined concert featuring quartets by Beethoven and Janáček (No. 2, "Intimate Pages") and Mendelssohn's Octet. ♦ April 23 at 5: More of the Society's young friends—and a musical chaperone, the violist Paul Neubauer—offer an intense program in which favorites by Brahms (the Clarinet Trio) and Schumann (the Piano Quartet) surround harder nuts by Schoenberg (the String Trio) and Kurtág ("Hommage à R. Sch."). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)

**KONSTANTIN SOUKHOVETSKI**
The dashing young Juilliard pianist, the winner of the school's William Petschek Piano Début Recital award, performs music by Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, and Glass. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. April 20 at 8.)

**TAKÁCS QUARTET**
Bartók's hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary, lost amid the Mozart and Shostakovich celebrations, will be marked by this richly conversational half-Hungarian ensemble: they perform the composer's Third String Quartet along with works by Mozart (the Clarinet Quintet, with Richard Stoltzman) and Schubert (the Quartet No. 14, "Death and the Maiden"). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. April 21 at 7:30.)

**BEAUX ARTS TRIO**
There's hardly a piano trio more traditional than this venerable group, but their latest in a series of Beethoven concerts will include not only that composer's Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 11, and the "Spring" Sonata for Violin and Piano but also the New York première of the Trio by the enigmatic Hungarian master György Kurtág. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. April 21 at 8.)

**ARIUM: "MUSIC FROM THE SILK ROAD"**
Joel Fan, a core member of Yo-Yo Ma's adventurous ensemble, performs a selection of solo-piano works from around the world in a casual new venue in the meatpacking district. (31 Little W. 12th St. 212-463-8630. April 22 at 8.)

**MUSIC AT THE FRICK COLLECTION**
Sonnerie, an early-music ensemble featuring the estimable violinist Monica Huggett, joins the fortepianist David Owen Norris to perform concertos by Mozart, J. C. Bach, and Phillip Hayes (a Piano Concerto from 1769, probably the first such work ever written). (1 E. 70th St. 212-547-0715. April 23 at 5.)

**CARNEGIE HALL RECITALS**
April 23 at 5: James Levine may be out of commission for a while, but his Met Chamber Ensemble will soldier on without him, performing works by Mozart (the String Quintet in G Minor), Poulenc, Dutilleux, and Andriessen ("Hout," a classic of hard-edged European minimalism). (Zankel Hall.) ♦ April 25 at 7:30: Midori, a former child star of the violin who is aggressively pushing into new musical territory, performs an all-contemporary recital featuring works by Yun, Lutoslawski (the "Partita"), Weir, Kurtág, and Goehr (the New York première of the Suite for Violin and Piano). (Zankel Hall.) ♦ April 25 at 8: The mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina, who rules over the Russian vocal repertory like no other female singer, joins the bass Ildar Abdrazakov and the pianist Dmitri Yefimov for an evocative evening of arias and romances by Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Rachmaninoff, Balakirev, and others. (Stern Auditorium.) (212-247-7800.)

**CYGNUS ENSEMBLE**
The stalwart new-music group celebrates its twentieth anniversary with a showcase concert of premières by Charles Wuorinen, David Lang, and Scott Johnson ("Bowery Haunt," for two electric guitars). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. April 23 at 8.)

**AVIAN MUSIC**
Composers of the rock-and-roll generation have a fling courtesy of the downtown performance collective, on a program that includes world premières by Jonathan Newman and Peter Flint as well as older works by such composers as Michael Daugherty, Michael Gandolfi, and Conrad Cummings ("I Wish They All Could Be," with the pianist Blair McMillen). (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. April 23 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

**ITZHAK PERLMAN AND PINCHAS ZUKERMAN**
Two old friends offer a concert of music for two violins (and violin and viola) by Bach, Mozart, Moszkowski, and Leclair. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. April 25 at 8.)

## MOVIES OPENING

**AMERICAN DREAMZ**
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 21. (In wide release.)

**MONGOLIAN PING PONG**
A comedy about three nomadic Mongolian boys who find a Ping-Pong ball and set out to return it to Beijing. Directed by Ning Hao. In Mongolian. Opening April 21. (ImaginAsian.)

**THE SENTINEL**
Kiefer Sutherland plays a Secret Service agent trying to hunt down a mole (Michael Douglas). Directed by Clark Johnson. Opening April 21. (In wide release.)

## TABLES FOR TWO

### TOCQUEVILLE

1 E. 15th St. (212-647-1515)—"I bought you lockers for your furs," the old song didn't exactly go, but that's what Marco Moreira and Jo-Ann Makovitzky have done here, in the new, bigger incarnation of their restaurant, which moved down the street from its old quarters in February. The black lockers, in the hallway between the front door and the small bar, are the most sensible and least elegant aspect of the place; it's all up—way up—from there, starting with a drinks menu that features the delicious Rolle, a blend of house-infused apple vodka, Calvados, and lemon juice, served chilled and straight up and bringing forth, with its scent and its taste, a profound sense of paradise found.

The restaurant is just a hundred yards or so away from the mayhem of Union Square, with its hordes of young people running after a good time as if it were about to roll under a couch; here, by contrast, all is calm, and the clientele, most of a rather more parental age, bask in the flattering, warm lighting and dignified Upper East Side atmosphere (made even more pleasing by the absence of background music). The food is a class act as well. The appetizers, by and large, point toward the sea, and you could do no better than the oyster chowder, a warm, frothy soup with plump oysters, little clusters of sevruga caviar, and slivers of applewood-smoked bacon.

Many of the entrées double their interest by showing two facets of an ingredient—slowly poached salmon with salmon belly, seared on one side, and a casserole and filet of Chatham cod, for example. The grilled lamb T-bone, the favorite of the table, was accompanied by a moussaka roulade, a little package of lamb wrapped with eggplant and finished with a sparky red-pepper sauce. Roasted polenta cake with braised pineapple and a dollop of yogurt ice cream was the top dessert, beating out the chocolate chiffon cake, which seemed to have been taken directly from the refrigerator. The old-fashioned atmosphere of Tocqueville is winning, up to a point; that point was the moment, experienced by one threesome, that the waiter, ignoring the decidedly female name on the credit card, atavistically placed the receipt right between people named Robert and Charles. (Open Mondays through Fridays for lunch and dinner and Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $27-$36.)

—*Nancy Franklin*

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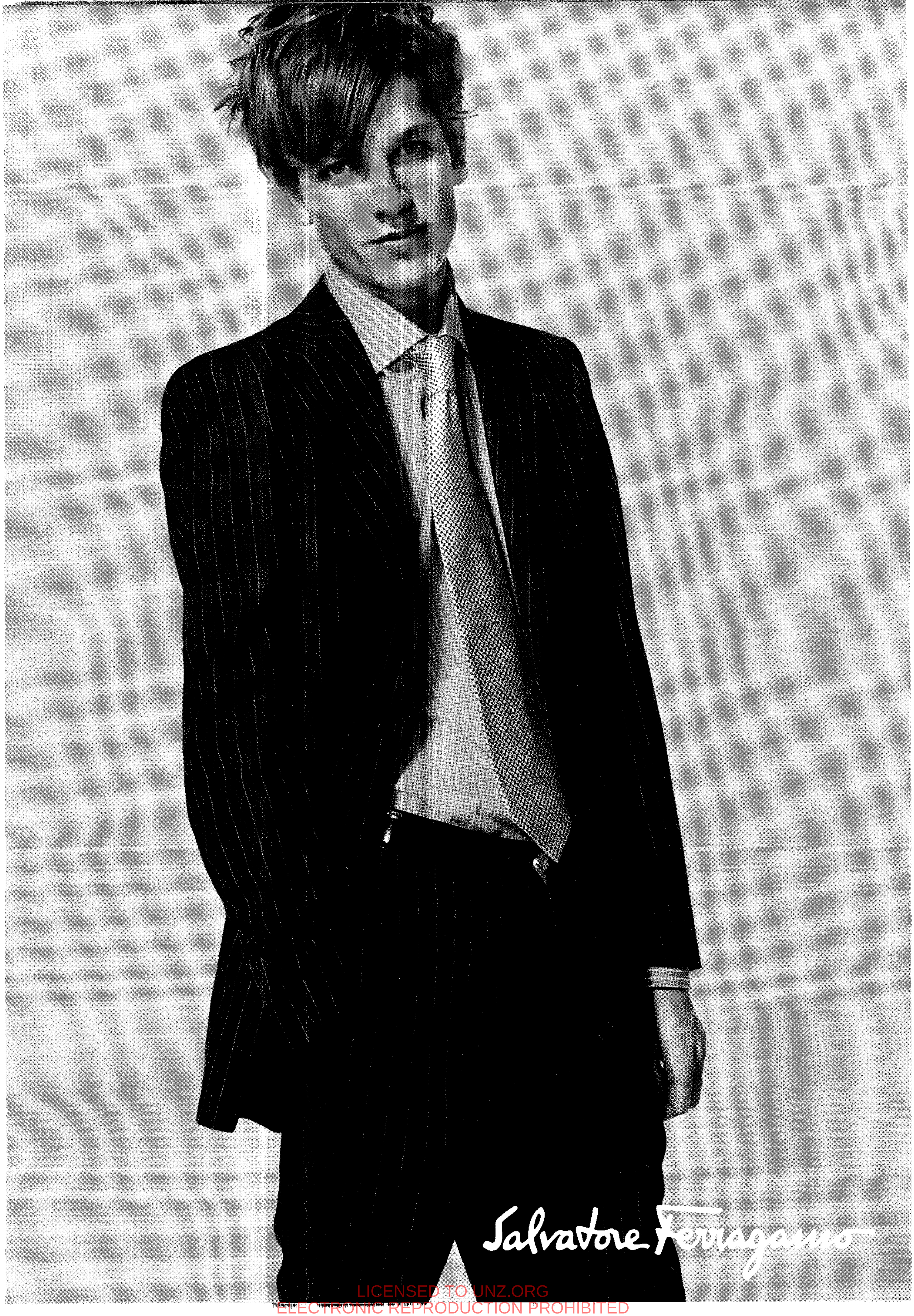
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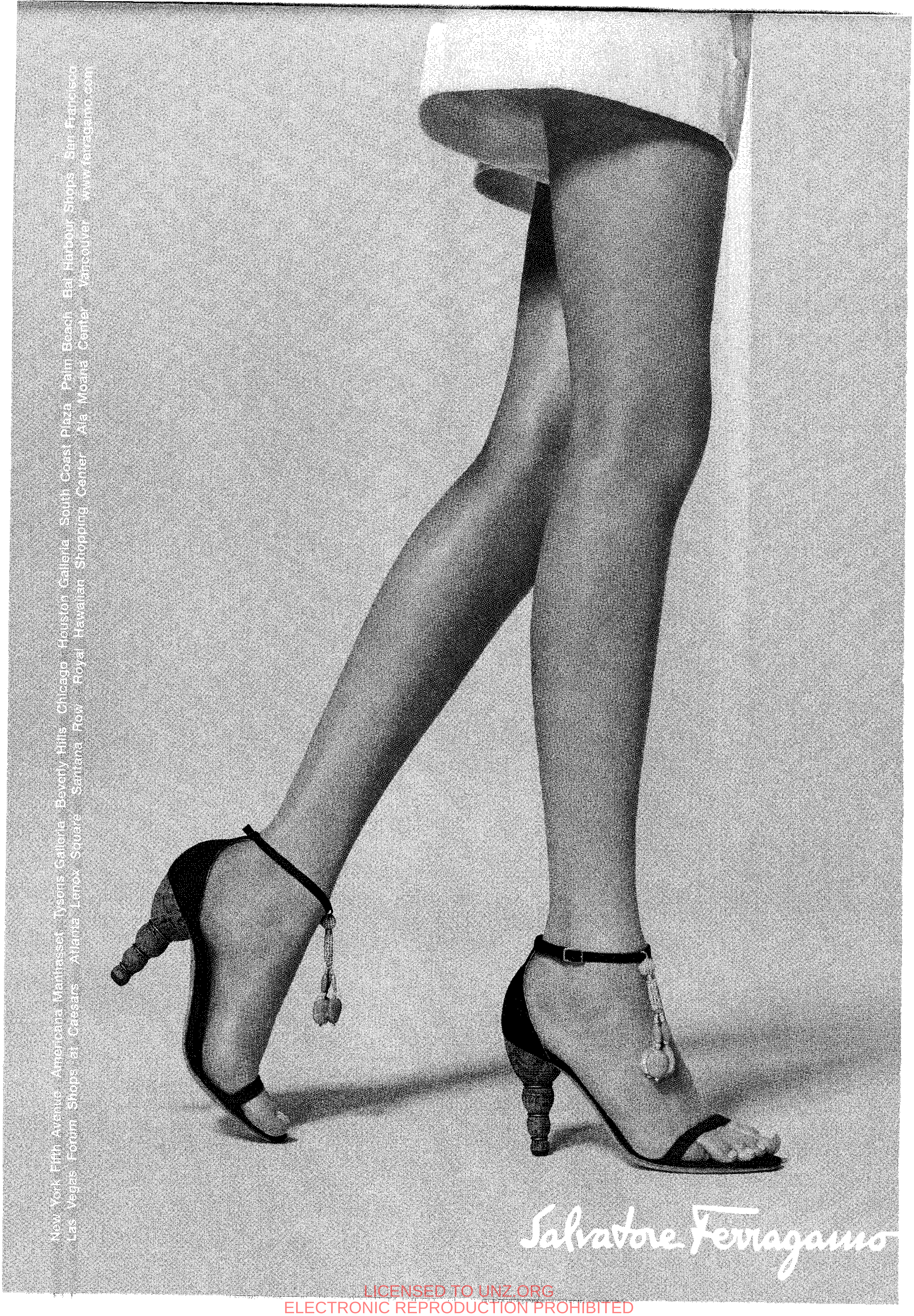
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**SILENT HILL**
A horror movie, directed by Christophe Gans, about a woman (Radha Mitchell) who seeks a cure for her daughter's fatal illness in a deserted town. Opening April 21. (In wide release.)

**SIR! NO SIR!**
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening April 19. (IFC Center.)

**SOMERSAULT**
Cate Shortland directed this drama from Australia, about a young girl's sexual and emotional awakening. Opening April 21. (Sunshine Cinema.)

**STOLEN**
A documentary, directed by Rebecca Dreyfus, about the unsolved theft of paintings from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston in 1990. Opening April 21. (Cinema Village.)

## NOW PLAYING

**BASIC INSTINCT 2**
Sharon Stone, in a reprise of her role as the allegedly murderous pulp novelist Catherine Tramell, slithers across the screen with perfectly smooth skin and a dead look in her eyes as she sinks her talons into the life of the maddeningly inert British psychiatrist Dr. Michael Glass (David Morrissey). The director, Michael Caton-Jones, leaches any possible excitement from this bafflingly staid thriller set in London, and even the tawdry attempts to liven it up with sex and violence fail to stir.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

**THE BENCHWARMERS**
There are few funny moments in this graceless, sloppily made comedy, directed by Dennis Dugan, about a trio of adult nerds (David Spade, Rob Schneider, and Jon Heder) who set out to defeat an entire league of snot-nosed adolescent jocks at the game of baseball, ostensibly as revenge on the jerks who tormented them when they were young geeks. But the essential heartlessness cannot be redeemed even by Heder doing a spot-on imitation of his hilarious character from "Napoleon Dynamite" or by Jon Lovitz as the ultimate "Star Wars"-loving nerd turned billionaire.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

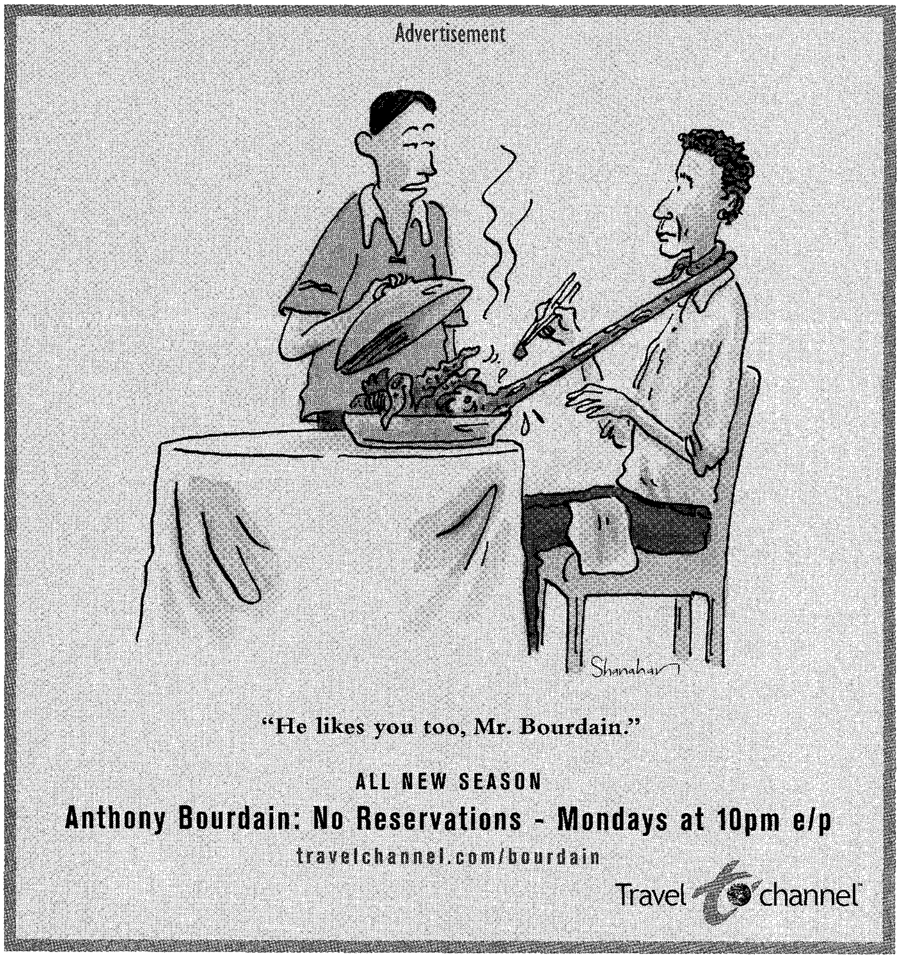
**BLACK GIRL**
Diouana (Mbissine Thérèse Diop), a young woman from Senegal, is brought to the South of France to work as nanny and maid to the family of a young French bureaucrat (Robert Fontaine) and his wife (Anne-Marie Jelinek). When they mistreat her, the desperate Diouana is ready for even the most extreme means of escape. Under the guise of this simple, realistic drama, Ousmane Sembene—in his first feature film, from 1966, which is also widely considered the first feature made by an indigenous African—expresses the frustrations and ambitions of an entire continent and its peoples. His images have the cool fury of an indictment: his ironic views of the French landscape and his shrewd citations of Godard's "Breathless" suggest that beneath the natural and cultural charms of France lurks a bilious racism born of colonialism. And the flashbacks to Diouana's earlier days in the capital city of Dakar depict the futility of a nominal independence from France without an authentic African political and artistic revival—toward which this small-scale film was a giant step. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Museum of Modern Art; April 20 and April 22.)

**BRICK**
The young director Rian Johnson, after raising money from his friends and parents, pulled off his dream project, a film noir. But in Johnson's version of noir, the inexorable Sam Spade-type detective is a mop-headed student, Brendan (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), wearing a sweatshirt and wire-rim glasses, and the setting is not the nighttime big city of Hollywood imagination—the usual claustrophobic noir precinct—but the preposterously sunny skies and wide-open spaces of San Clemente, California. The story, which involves a dead girl and a student drug gang, has the semi-unfathomable complexity of "The Maltese Falcon" and "The Big Sleep," and the characters, lounging against the blank outside wall of the school, speak in cryptic jive patter ("Bulls would only gum it," i.e., cops are dumb). "Brick" is often quite funny, but not in a campy or condescending way—Johnson never makes the distance from the original models seem laughable. The movie develops its own kind of goofy tensions: Johnson renders the wide-open spaces of a school yard as menacing as the darkened rooms of a Warner Bros. thriller.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/3/06.) (Angelika Film Center.)

**CAFÉ LUMIÈRE**
In Hou Hsiao-Hsien's atmospheric drama, from 2003, Yoko (Yo Hitoto), a young Japanese woman with a curious yet reserved manner, returns home to her bohemian flat and rekindles old connections. Her studies—she has an interest in a composer who worked in Japan in the nineteen-thirties—lead her to a rumpled Tokyo bookstore and its proprietor, Hajime (Tadanobu Asano), a quizzical young man who spends his spare time making audio recordings of trains and train stations throughout the region. Their friendship remains tenuous, as do Yoko's relations with her parents, to whom she reveals that she is pregnant by one of her students. Although ever in motion, these people do very little: their lives are held in place by the past and the future. Hou's exquisite, luminous images—including many of trains—are latent with regret and expectation, and if the film does not exactly burst with action its limpid stillness is nonetheless inwardly thrilling. In Japanese.—*R.B.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; April 21.)

**DON'T COME KNOCKING**
This bittersweet Western blues, directed by Wim Wenders from a script by Sam Shepard, is a minor-key delight. Shepard plays Howard Spence, an aging star of Western films and a legendary tabloid troublemaker who wants out: he sneaks off the set and finds his mother (Eva Marie Saint, in a performance of remarkably high relief), whom he hasn't seen in more than thirty years. She lets slip a word about his son, whom he has never met, and he heads for Butte, Montana, to look for him. What Spence finds there requires some suspension of disbelief—not just his son, Earl (Gabriel Mann), and Earl's mother (Jessica Lange) but also a daughter, Sky (the gossamer Sarah Polley), whom he had with another woman; it's as if no one in Butte around 1980 had ever heard of a paternity suit. The faith in the implausible is rewarded. Shepard's sharp writing memorably delineates the quartet's quirky struggles to connect, and though Wenders, a former master of understatement, overplays the big moments with visual frills, he keeps the outer and inner journeys in delicate balance. Despite the film's false notes, its ballad-like moods ring true.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

**L'ENFANT (THE CHILD)**
A boy is born to a pair of Belgian lovers, who seem hardly more than children themselves. Sonia (Déborah François) is pretty, pained, and underdressed, with broad bones and a dirty laugh. Bruno (Jérémie Renier) is a wastrel and a petty crook, with a hole where his conscience ought to be. He doesn't work, he spends money as soon as he gets it, and, on a whim, he sells the little boy; the remainder of the film, by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, guides us through the aftermath of his folly. Many of the Dardenne trademarks, familiar from "Rosetta," are in place: the bleak and shabby backdrops, the quick but unflamboyant manner of the storytelling, and the urge to delve without scorn into the lives and morals of an underclass. Despite all those virtues, the new film feels laborious—Bruno's actions seem hollow and repugnant, fending off our sympathies, and his presence elbows out the more deserving cases of Sonia and Steve (Jérémie Segard), the teenaged accomplice to his crimes. The film ends with Bruno in tears, but any parents watching will be far more concerned about the baby, who for some mysterious reason never cries at all. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (3/27/06) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)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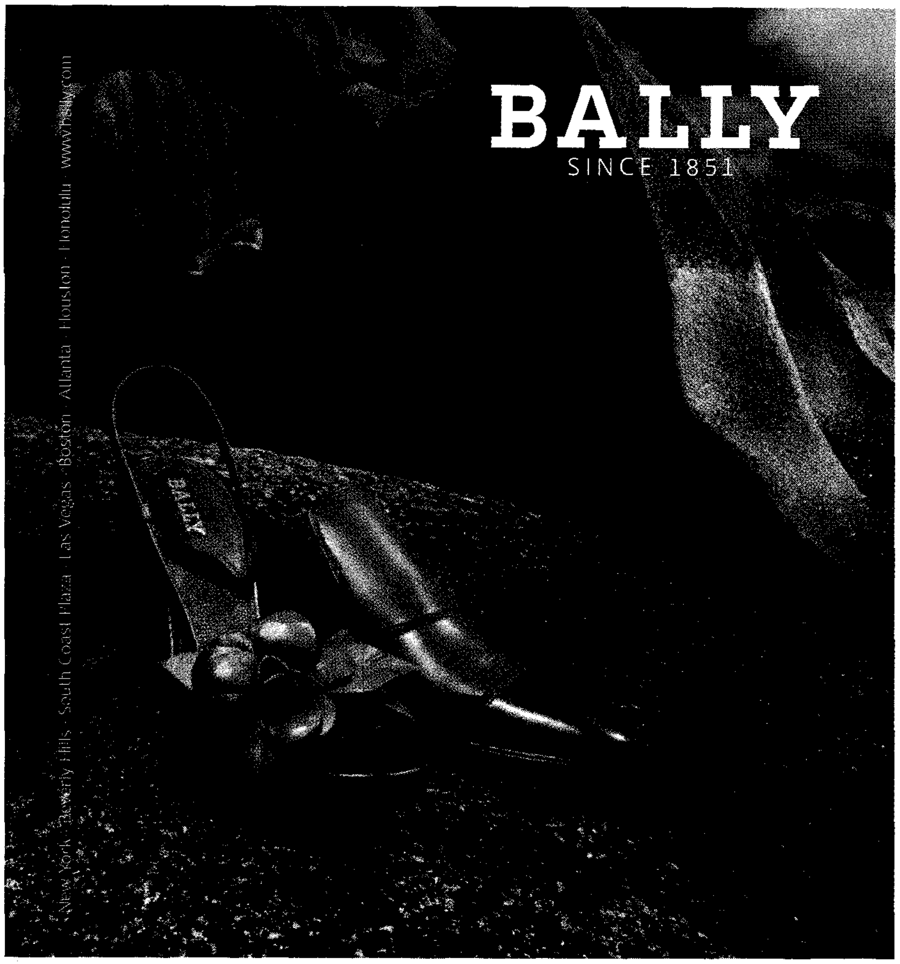
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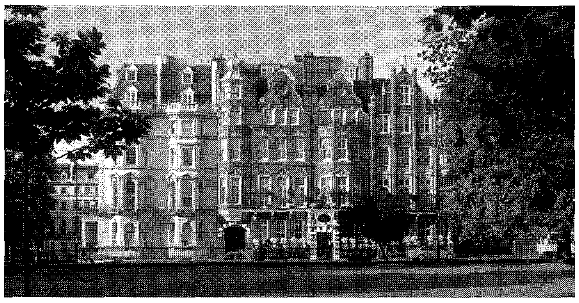

S'WANDERFUL

The view out the window of The Milestone reveals the delightful contours of Kensington Palace and the alluring lawn ornaments of wandering swans. A Russian guest in the process of opening his own bird sanctuary requested that The Milestone please procure 24 swans. While pointing out that the creatures are protected by Royal Charter, the staff was able to navigate the legal labyrinth and book passage for the birds to Russia for a mere £675 per swan.

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**FREE ZONE**
Hanna (Hanna Laslo), a hard-charging Israeli woman, crosses the border into Jordan in an S.U.V. in order to conclude a business deal in an ungoverned economic trading zone bordered by Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia—an odd but hopeful place in which national and religious differences get dissolved by commerce. Her passenger is a young American woman (Natalie Portman), whose engagement to a Spanish-Israeli man is coming apart. This movie by the veteran Israeli filmmaker Amos Gitai has some exciting passages and a sense of talented people knocking around in a vacuum. But, structurally, it's a mess. People barge in with long, complicated stories falling from their lips, and we have only a vague idea of who they are; Natalie Portman seems to be a mere observer, and then, abruptly, she ups and runs away. See it for the landscapes and an occasional burst of powerful emotion. In English, Hebrew, and Arabic.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

**FRIENDS WITH MONEY**
The independent writer-director Nicole Holofcener had a fresh idea for a movie: how would three well-off married women (Catherine Keener, Frances McDormand, Joan Cusack), living in Los Angeles, sustain their friendship with a younger woman who is unmarried, broke, working as a housekeeper, and given to meaningless relationships with jerks? By most standards, and particularly by wealthy Los Angeles standards, Olivia (Jennifer Aniston) is a loser, and the wealthy, notoriously, do not like to hang out with losers. In a series of tense ensemble scenes, Holofcener explores not only the gossip and shifting alliances in these relationships but the three marriages as well. The trouble with this scheme, however, is that Olivia has no drives or hopes or powerful regrets; she has nothing to say, and Aniston, a very limited actress, does most of her work with her lower lip, which she wrinkles and tucks under the upper one. She pulls so little out of herself that we lose all interest in her by the middle of the picture. But there are good bits from the other performers, particularly McDormand as a woman who has everything going for her but throws fits over trivialities.—*D.D.* (4/17/06) (In wide release.)

**I AM A SEX ADDICT**
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (IFC Center.)

**ICE AGE: THE MELTDOWN**
This second "Ice Age" follows the exploits of Manny the mammoth (voiced by Ray Romano), Sid the sloth (John Leguizamo), and Diego the sabre-toothed tiger (Denis Leary) as they flee a potential flood (brought on by global warming) for even icier environs. This improved follow-up to the 2002 animated hit boasts a more nuanced look (the animals' facial expressions are quite lively, and the snowy backgrounds are more detailed), and the romping, stomping screenplay has a brisk anything-goes quality. The high point is a musical number consisting of flying vultures circling their prey and breaking into a Busby Berkeley routine to the tune "Food, Glorious Food." Directed by Carlos Saldanha.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

**INSIDE MAN**
A gang led by an unflustered leader in shades (Clive Owen) holds up a New York bank, taking a small crowd of hostages. Along come the cops (including Willem Dafoe) and a couple of expert negotiators (Denzel Washington and Chiwetel Ejiofor), who, unconvinced by the thieves' demands, begin to wonder what they really want. Other players include Christopher Plummer, as the bank's suspiciously smooth president, and Jodie Foster, as some kind of facilitator; her role is never quite specified, and you could say the same of Spike Lee, who directs the film as if barely enthused by the prospect of a heist. He mangles a few thrills, ignores the claims of logic, and underuses half of his tremendous cast. (The best cameo comes from Florina Petcu, as a shameless, cigarette-waving Albanian floozy.) What does remain, though, is a nervous riff on civic ten-

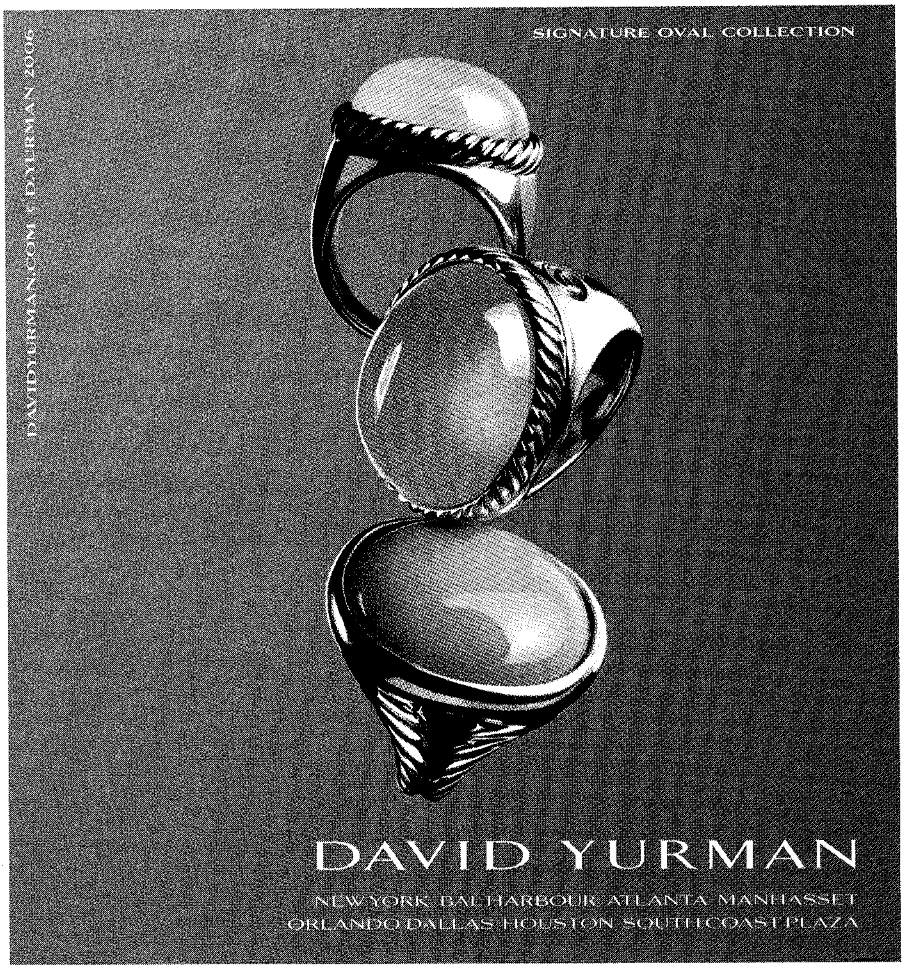
sion, a mean and funny turn from Washington, and—as you might expect from Lee—a constant, low-level venting of racial spleen.—*A.L.* (3/27/06) (In wide release.)

**LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN**
Paul McGuigan's rackety thriller starts a quarter of a century ago, then leaps to the present day. The connection between these two time zones is one of the mysteries of the movie, though not so mysterious that most viewers won't have worked it out after an hour. The film badly wants to be baffling, just as it yearns to be cynical, thuggish, and smart—not unlike the Boss (Morgan Freeman) and the Rabbi (Ben Kingsley), a pair of hoods who nourish a mutual hatred. Each is also interested in Slevin (Josh Hartnett), a hapless young man who finds himself in the wrong apartment at the wrong time. The ensuing complications are borrowed, with acknowledgment, from "North by Northwest," although it was possibly unwise to invite comparisons with one of cinema's most smoothly pleasurable tales. McGuigan's movie is more concerned with pleasing itself, and in that pursuit many strong supporting players, such as Stanley Tucci, Lucy Liu, Danny Aiello, and Bruce Willis, are left embarrassed and stranded. Only one puzzle remains: given that we see both the Willis of today and the Willis of yesteryear, how come he looks younger now?—*A.L.* (4/10/06) (In wide release.)

**MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT**
This audacious, sensual portrait of an alienated intellectual in Castro's Cuba circa 1961 is one of the great movies of its era. The director, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, puts the audience in the head of a would-be writer (Sergio Corrieri, in a marvellous performance) who comes to understand just how conflicted he is about everything—class and sex included. There's a ruthless, universal brand of comedy in his more fatuous deeds and utterances: he views the Revolution as his personal revenge against the stupidity of the Cuban bourgeoisie. But the movie is also full of tough-minded mystery. The classic sequence of the writer taking a girl to the Hemingway Museum is rich with ironies about the interplay of art, celebrity, and social conscience. In Spanish. Released in 1968.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; April 23.)

**THE NOTORIOUS BETTIE PAGE**
A bio-pic devoted to a body—Gretchen Mol's body, which is seen in every degree of cladding, from full to scanty to blissfully naked. Mol plays a real-life pinup queen of the fifties, Bettie Page, who appeared in coy nudie magazines and in highly unconvincing and frequently out-of-focus lesbian bondage movies with titles like "Sally's Punishment." As re-created by Mary Harron, who both wrote the screenplay (with Guinevere Turner) and directed, Bettie was a nice, devout girl from Nashville who never quite understood the extraordinary effect her pictures had on other people. Smut was a low-rent, casually lousy scene in those days, and Bettie's innocence fit right in. Satirizing the hysteria caused by a naïve girl who likes to disrobe is a good joke, but there is a problem with Harron's affectionate, lighthearted approach—it leaches all the danger out of the subject. In this movie, there isn't any genuine power in erotic imagery or any madness in perversion. With Lili Taylor and Chris Bauer as dirty-picture peddlers, David Strathairn as the earnest Senator Estes Kefauver, and Jonathan Woodward as Bettie's puzzled actor boyfriend. Shot in noirish black-and-white and dazzling color.—*D.D.* (4/17/06) (In wide release.)

**SHE'S THE MAN**
This tween comedy, inspired by Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," has the pacing, casting, and dumbed-down plot of a sitcom, but Amanda Bynes, from the Nickelodeon variety program "The Amanda Show," brings a quirky spark and a redeeming loose humor to her role. Viola (Bynes), a soccer ace who is barred from the boys' team because of her sex, hatches a plan to go incognito as her brother, Sebastian (who is out of town), to prove she can play just as well as the boys. When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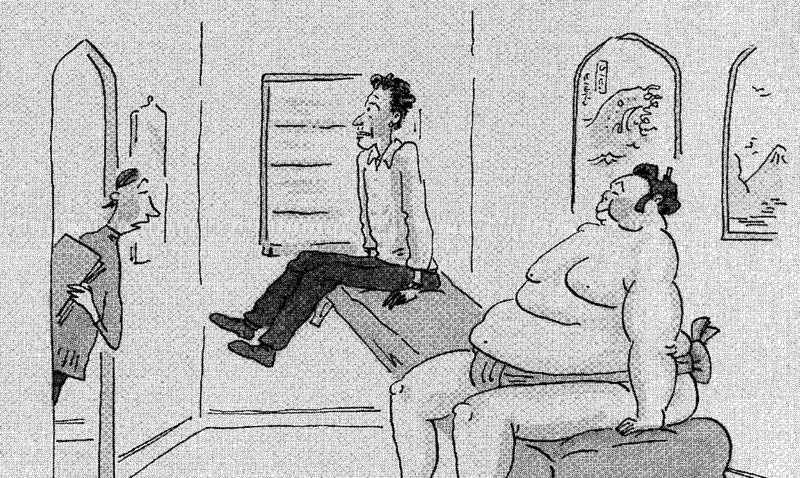

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portraying the ersatz Sebastian, Bynes not only looks, somewhat freakishly and rather convincingly, like a baby-faced young man but also uses her arsenal of facial expressions and her uncanny delivery to full comedic effect.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

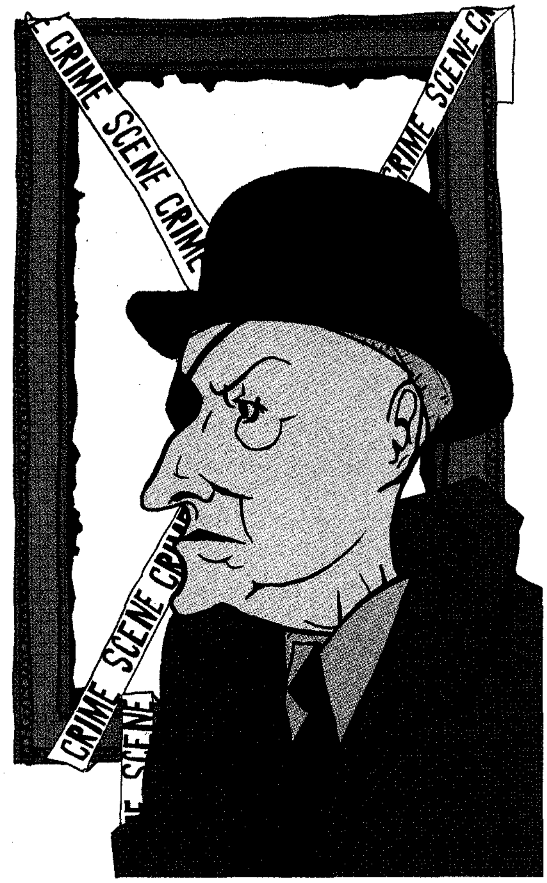
**SIR! NO SIR!**
The rise of protest against the Vietnam War is more than forty years in the past. This blunt, heartfelt documentary, directed by David Zeiger, revives those passionate days and restores the historical record with his account of widespread opposition to the war from within the U.S. military itself. Starting with the lonely voices of Donald Duncan, a Green Beret who resigned his commission in 1965, and Howard Levy, a dermatologist who accepted court-martial rather than train other Army doctors, Zeiger presents men and women who braved the stockade or worse to denounce the war from within. Jane Fonda is a character here, as she gives a moving account of her activities on behalf of the soldiers themselves. Along the way, myths are dispelled and dormant outrage reignited: Zeiger's technique, though conventional, is eloquent, as are the interviewees, whose righteous energy burns as brightly now as in the evocative archival footage.—*R.B.* (IFC Center.)

**SLITHER**
It's rednecks versus zombies in James Gunn's delightfully disgusting comic horror film, in which parasites from outer space invade their hosts. Gunn (who wrote the exuberant "Dawn of the Dead" remake) is a true movie nut, with a tongue-in-cheek approach to horror that aspires to "Tremors" and "Rabid" and injects the genre with his own brand of twisty black humor. The film is equally outrageous and sardonic, and the cast, which includes "Firefly"'s great Nathan Fillion, is more than game (literally). Awful fun.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

**STEAMBOAT BILL, JR.**
One of the least known of the Buster Keaton features, yet it possibly ranks right at the top. It is certainly the most bizarrely Freudian of his adventures, dealing with a tiny son's attempt to prove himself to his huge, burly, rejecting father. Ernest Torrence is the father—a tough Mississippi-steamboat captain, who does not conceal his disgust when Junior (Keaton) arrives to join him, nattily dressed in bell-bottoms, a polka-dot tie, and a beret. When the father is in jail, Keaton tries to hand him a gigantic loaf of bread containing tools for breaking out, but the father doesn't understand what's in it and refuses the bread; Keaton mutters, "My father is ashamed of my baking." The film features a memorable comic cyclone and a peerless (and much imitated) sequence in which Keaton tries on hats and changes personality with each, becoming a series of movie stars of the period. Directed by Charles Reisner. Released in 1928. Silent.—*Pauline Kael* (Thalia Theatre; April 23 and April 25.)

**THANK YOU FOR SMOKING**
Nick Naylor (Aaron Eckhart), the chief spokesman for the tobacco lobby in Washington, is handsome and likable, a mixture of swagger and impudent candor. Nick knows that his arguments in favor of smoking are rubbish, but he enjoys the game of spin too much to give it up. This shrewdly entertaining satirical comedy, adapted by Jason Reitman (son of the veteran director Ivan Reitman) from Christopher Buckley's 1994 novel, loves the brazen moxie of "sin" lobbyists without being fooled by them. The comic highlight of the movie is the regular lunch sessions that Nick holds with the lobbyists for the alcohol and firearms industries (Maria Bello and David Koechner)—the three of them, boasting of the lethality of their respective clients, might be doing a recurring skit on "Saturday Night Live." When Nick gets written up by a seductive reporter (Katie Holmes) from the Washington *Probe*, his life goes into a tailspin. With Cameron Bright as Nick's adoring son, J. K. Simmons and Robert Duvall as tobacco executives, Rob Lowe and Adam Brody as glib Hollywood types, and William H. Macy as a sanctimonious anti-smoking senator from Vermont who has a collection of maple-syrup bottles in his office. Jason Reitman's direction is fast-moving and witty; the movie is a winner.—*D.D.* (4/3/06) (In wide release.)

**V FOR VENDETTA**
A dunderheaded pop fantasia that celebrates terrorism and destruction. The graphic-novel creators Alan Moore and David Lloyd conceived the material in the nineteen-eighties during the reign of Margaret Thatcher. Setting their work in 1997, they projected a fascist future for England and a rebel hero—a terrorist in a Guy Fawkes mask who blows up the Parliament buildings and the Prime Minister's residence. The producer, Joel Silver, and the Wachowskis, Larry and Andy, grafted references to the current condition of warfare and fear onto this template, lifting details out of Orwell's "1984" and a variety of pop myths. Hugo Weaving is the caped and masked man who kills and blows things up; Natalie Portman is the innocent who becomes his victim and his follower. The movie has some visual life to it, but it's so foolish that you come out shaking your head. Among other things, the ineptitude of "Vendetta" suggests that pop isn't a very good mode for political allegory. With Stephen Rea. Directed by the Wachowski brothers' protégé, James McTeigue.—*D.D.* (3/20/06) (In wide release.)



*Detective Harold Smith pursues art thieves in "Stolen," a documentary opening April 21.*

JASHAR AWAN

### *Also Playing*

**BELLE DE JOUR:** Paris. **KINKY BOOTS:** In wide release. **PHAT GIRLZ:** In wide release. **SCARY MOVIE 4:** In wide release. **TAKE THE LEAD:** In wide release. **THE WILD:** In wide release.

## REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

*Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.*

**ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES**
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"NewFilmmakers Presents." April 19 at 6: Short films about dance. ♦ April 19 at 7: "Road Map Warrior Women" (2000, Jen Senko) and "Censorious" (2005, Carol Jackson). ♦ April 19 at 8: Short films and live performances by Amy Greenfield and Andrea Beeman. ♦ The films of BB Optics. April 19 at 8: Short films by Martha Colburn, Bruce Nauman, and Bradley Eros (1972-2002) and other works, including J.F.K.-assassination reënactments shot for the Warren Commission (c. 1963-1964). ♦ April 25 at 8: Short films by Robert Huot, Katy Martin, Tony Conrad, and Peter Herwitz (1968-93). ♦ "Starring Taylor Mead." April 20 at 7:30 and April 23 at 6: "The Flower Thief" (1960, Ron Rice). ♦ April 21 at 8: Short films by Anton Perich (1972-73), program one. ♦ April 22 at 8: Short films by Perich (1972-73), program two. ♦ April 23 at 8: "The Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man" (1963/82, Rice). ♦ "The *Onion* Presents." April 20 at 8: "Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia" (1974, Sam Peckinpah). ♦ Rare films by Jacques Rivette. April 21-23 at 7: "Out 1: Spectre" (1971-72; in French). ♦ April 22-23 at 5: "Jean Renoir: Le Patron," part three (1966; in French). ♦ "Storefront Films." April 25 at 7:30: "Ciudad Moderna" (2004, Terence Gower) and "The Madness of Rock 'n' Roll" (1956, Fernando Méndez; in Spanish, no subtitles).

**BAM ROSE CINEMAS**
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Cinema Tropical." April 19 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Toro Negro (Black Bull)" (2005, Pedro González Rubio and Carlos Armella; in Spanish). ♦ "Cinemachat with Elliott Stein." April 20 at 4:30 and 7: "The Offence" (1972, Sidney Lumet). The 7 P.M. show will be followed by a discussion with Lumet and Stein. ♦ Through April 26: "Village Voice Best of 2005." April 21 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Café Lumière" (†). ♦ April 22 at 7: "Three Times" (2005, Hou Hsiao-Hsien; in Mandarin and Taiwanese). ♦ April 23 at 3, 6, and 9: "Princess Raccoon" (2005, Seijun Suzuki; in Japanese). ♦ "It Happened in Brooklyn." April 24 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "It Happened in Brooklyn" (1947, Richard Whorf). The 6:50 show will be introduced by John Manbeck and Pete Hamill. ♦ "Shelley Winters vs. the Water." April 25 at 4:30 and 9: "The Poseidon Adventure" (1972, Ronald Neame).

**FILM FORUM**
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. April 19-20 at 1:20, 3:15, 5:10, 7:05, and 9: "Days of Heaven" (1978, Terrence Malick). ♦ April 21-25 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "Repulsion" (1965, Roman Polanski).

**FLORENCE GOULD HALL**
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of Chantal Akerman. April 25 at 12:30 and 6:30: "News from Home" (1977; in French). ♦ April 25 at 3:30 and 9: "Tomorrow We Move" (2004; in French).

**IFC CENTER**
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. April 21-22 at noon: "High and Low" (1963, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." April 21-22: "Black Caesar" (1973, Larry Cohen).

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Asian Cinevisions." April 19 at 6 and April 22 at 4: "Of Love and Eggs" (2004, Garin Nugroho; in Bahasa Indonesian). ♦ Through April 30: "Baseball and American Culture." April 19 at 6: "The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings" (1976, John Badham). ♦ April 21 at 8:30: "The Natural" (1984, Barry Levinson). ♦ April 23

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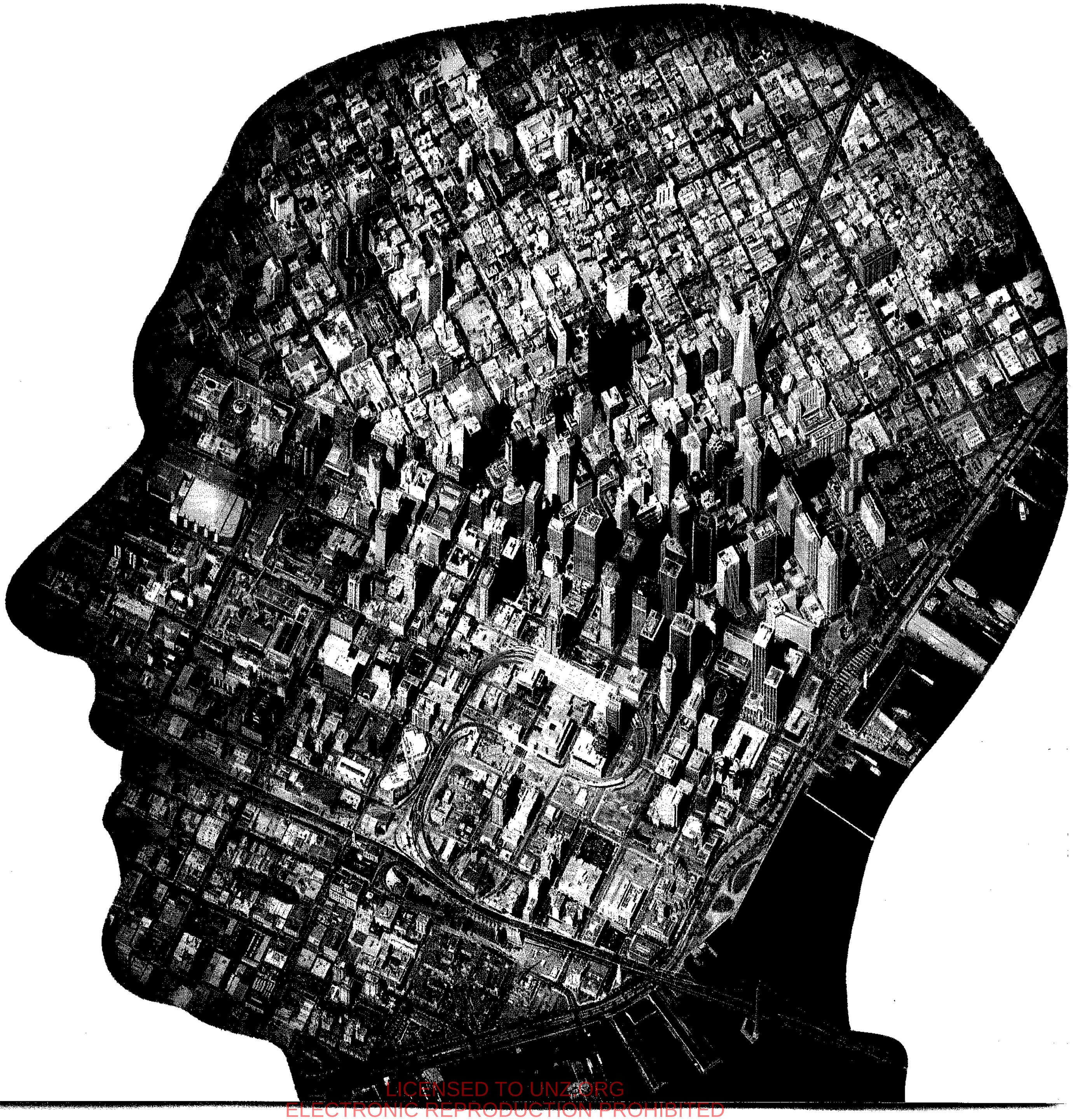


at 1: “Viva Baseball!” (2005, Dan Klores). ♦ Special screenings. April 19 at 8: “American Studies” (2003, Joëlle Tuerlinckx), introduced by the director. ♦ April 22 at 7: Short films by Marcel Dzama (1966-2006). ♦ “Edvard Munch and His Time.” April 19 at 8:15: “The Hips of J.W.” (1997, João César Monteiro; in Portuguese). ♦ Through May 15: “Rediscovering Roscoe: The Careers of ‘Fatty’ Arbuckle.” For more information, go to www.moma.org. April 20 at 6: “Career Overview,” program one (1913-33). ♦ April 20 at 8: “Early Keystones,” program two (1913-14). ♦ April 21 at 6: “Box Office Star,” program three (1914-15). ♦ April 21 at 8: “The Sophisticated Director,” program four (1915-17). ♦ April 22 at 6: “A New Freedom,” program five (1917). ♦ April 22 at 8: “Spoofs and Farces,” program six (1918). ♦ April 23 at 2: “Late Shorts and Features,” part one, program seven (1919-20). ♦ April 23 at 5: “Late Shorts and Features,” part two, program eight (1919-20). ♦ April 24 at 8:30: “Directing After the Scandal,” part one, program nine (1922-25). ♦ “Prix Jean Vigo.” April 20 at 6:30 and April 22 at 2: “Black Girl” (†) and “Leo the Moon” (1956, Alain Jessua; in French). ♦ Through April 30: “Ziegler Film, Berlin.” April 20 at 8:30: “Korczak” (1990, Andrzej Wajda; in Polish and German). ♦ April 21 at 6: “Four Erotic Tales” (1994-2003, Melvin Van Peebles, Mani Kaul, Susan Streitfeld, and Dito Tsintsadze). ♦ April 23 at 4:30: “Fabian” (1978, Wolf Gremm; in German). ♦ April 24 at 8:30: “Summer Folk” (1975, Peter Stein; in German).

**MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Free senior matinée. April 19 at 10:30 A.M.: “Swing Time” (1936, George Stevens). ♦ “Spring Recess with Blue Sky Studios.” April 19 and April 21 at 1:30: “Ice Age” (2002, Chris Wedge and Carlos Saldanha). ♦ April 20 at 1:30: “Robots” (2005, Wedge and Saldanha). ♦ “Independence World Cinema Showcase.” April 21 at 7:30: “Black” (2005, Sanjay Leela Bhansali; in Hindi and English). ♦ April 22 at 6:30: “Guantanamera” (1995, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea; in Spanish); introduced by the actress Mirta Ibarra. ♦ April 23 at 6:30: “Memories of Underdevelopment” (†). ♦ “Fist and Sword.” April 23 at 1:30: “Peking Opera Blues” (1986, Tsui Hark; in Cantonese).

**PIONEER THEATRE**
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Through April 26: “Comedy Fortnight.” April 19 at 7: “Manhattan” (1979, Woody Allen). ♦ April 20 at 7: A selection of clips from *Rocketboom*, presented by Amanda Congdon and Andrew Baron. ♦ April 21 at 11:30: “Love and Death” (Allen, 1975). ♦ April 22 at 7: Short films about love. ♦ April 22 at 11:30: “The Cable Guy” (1996, Ben Stiller). ♦ April 23 at 7: A program of short animated films. ♦ April 24 at 6:30: “Mon Oncle” (1958, Jacques Tati; in French). ♦ Special screenings. April 21-25 at 4:30: “In Her Line of Fire” (2006, Brian Trenchard-Smith). ♦ April 23 at 2:45: “24 Hours on Craigslist” (2005, Michael Ferris Gibson). ♦ April 25 at 7: “Blue Vinyl” (2002, Judith Helfand).

**SUNSHINE CINEMA**
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—“Sunshine@Midnight.” April 21-22: “Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey” (2005, Sam Dunn, Scot McFayden, and Jessica Joy Wise).

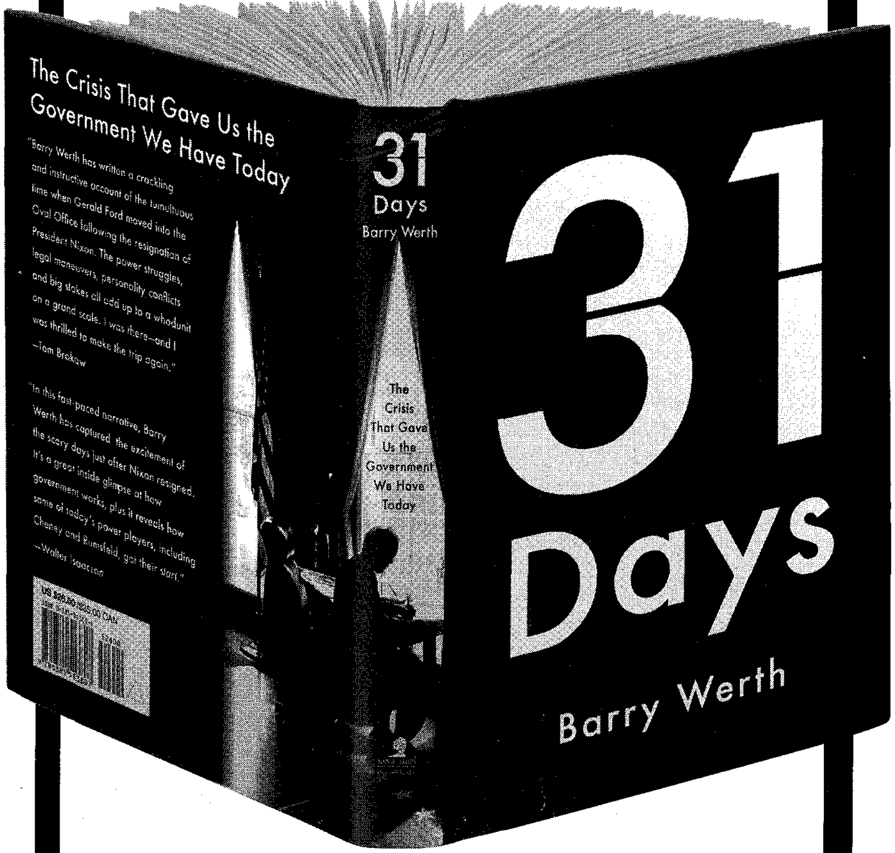
**THALIA THEATRE**
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Special screenings. April 23 at 3 and April 25 at 4:30: “Steamboat Bill, Jr.” (†). ♦ April 23 at 5:30 and April 25 at 7: “Caché (Hidden)” (2005, Michael Haneke).

**WALTER READE THEATRE**
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—“A Road Map of the Soul,” the complete films of Krzysztof Kieślowski. All films are in Polish, except where noted. April 19 at 2 and April 23 at 8:20: “Three Colors: Red” (1994; in French). ♦ April 19 at 4: “Blind Chance” (1981). ♦ April 19 at 6:30: “Decalogue,” parts one and two (1988). ♦ April 19 at 8:45: “Decalogue,” parts three and four (1988). ♦ April 22 at 6:30: “Decalogue,” parts five and six (1988). ♦ April 22 at 8:45: “Decalogue,” parts seven and eight (1989). ♦ April 23 at 2: “Decalogue,” parts nine and ten (1989). ♦ April 23 at 4:30: “Three

31 Days of turmoil

31 Days of clashing wills

31 Days of crisis that gave us the government we have today


The Crisis That Gave Us the Government We Have Today
“Barry Werth has written a crackling and instructive account of the tumultuous time when Gerald Ford moved into the Oval Office following the resignation of President Nixon. The power struggles, legal maneuvers, personality conflicts and big stakes all add up to a whodunit on a grand scale. I was there—and I was thrilled to make the trip again.”
—Tom Brokaw
“In this fast-paced narrative, Barry Werth has captured the excitement of the scary days just after Nixon resigned. It’s a great inside glimpse at how government works, plus it reveals how some of today’s power players, including Cheney and Rumsfeld, got their start.”
—Walter Isaacson
31 Days
Barry Werth
The Crisis That Gave Us the Government We Have Today
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—**TOM BROKAW,** author of *The Greatest Generation*

**“Fast-paced…** It reveals how some of today’s power players, including Cheney and Rumsfeld, got their start.”
—**WALTER ISAACSON,** author of *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*

**“A riveting, minute-by-minute account** of 31 days that affected our nation, with relevance to everything that has happened since.”
—**RICHARD HOLBROOKE,** former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations

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Colors: Blue" (1993; in French, Romanian, and Polish). ♦ April 23 at 6:30: "Three Colors: White" (1993; in Polish, French, and English). ♦ "Golden Silents." April 21 at 6:30 and 9: "The Eagle" (1925, Clarence Brown; silent). ♦ Through May 9: "Richard Wagner on Film." April 22 at 2: "The Golden Ring" (1964, Humphrey Burton), featuring Sir Georg Solti conducting "Götterdämmerung." ♦ April 22 at 4: Leonard Bernstein conducts excerpts from "Tristan und Isolde" and other operas. ♦ April 25 at 6: "Three Great Wagnerian Voices," featuring Lauritz Melchior, Jon Vickers, and Hans Hotter. ♦ April 25 at 8:30: "Great Wagner Sopranos," featuring Kirsten Flagstad, Helen Traubel, Birgit Nilsson, and Régine Crespin.

## READINGS AND TALKS

### POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Society presents a tribute to our city's small presses, with readings by editors and poets from Fence Books, Four Way Books, Futurepoem Books, and Ugly Duckling Presse. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave., at 25th St. 646-312-4085. April 19 at 7:30.)

### NATIONAL ARTS CLUB

The novelists Patrick McGrath, Emily Barton, and Terese Svoboda offer selections from their work. (15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary. April 19 at 7:30.)

### NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Ed Koch joins the writers Kenneth D. Ackerman and Pete Hamill for a discussion about the infamous Tammany Hall leader Boss Tweed. (170 Central Park W., at 77th St. 212-485-9205. April 20 at 6:30.)

### SHAKESPEARE MARATHON

Liev Schreiber, Maggie Gyllenhaal, John Turturro, F. Murray Abraham, and many other actors celebrate Shakespeare's four-hundred-and-forty-second birthday with a free reading of his plays and poetry. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. No tickets necessary. April 23, from 3:30 to 7:30.)

### CONSTANCE QUARTERMAN BRIDGES

The winner of the 2005 Cave Canem Poetry Prize reads from her work, joined by the contest's judge, Sonia Sanchez, and two finalists, Christian Campbell and Raina Leon. (Elebash Recital Hall, City University of New York Graduate Center, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. No tickets necessary. April 25 at 7.)

### PEN WORLD VOICES FESTIVAL

This year's gathering of international writers begins with a lecture by the Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk, followed by a conversation with Margaret Atwood. Salman Rushdie provides the introduction. The festival continues through the end of the month. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, 7 E. 7th St. April 25 at 7. For more information about the festival, visit www.pen.org.)

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

### NEW YORK ANTIQUARIAN BOOK FAIR

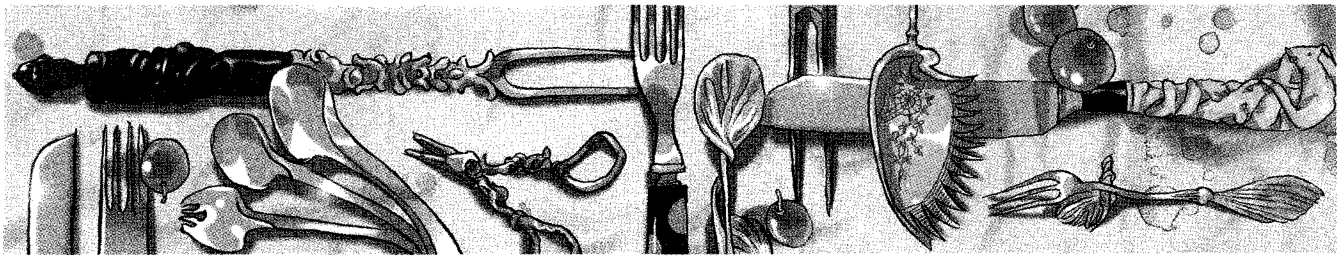
The oldest book fair in the country returns to the Park Avenue Armory, tempting local intellectuals to blow their children's college funds on such delights as a first edition of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "This Side of Paradise," a printer's proof of Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" tied with string, and an 1864 amnesty proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln. (Park Ave. at 67th St. April 20-23. For more information, call 212-777-5218.)

### EARTH DAY

Earth Day is April 22, and an alfresco EarthFair is planned for April 21-22 outside Grand Central Terminal. (For more information, visit www.earthdayny.org.) Other events around town include a treasure hunt, bulb planting, and walking tours in Central Park on April 22 (for details, visit centralparknyc.org) and the Green Apple Music & Arts Festival (see Night Life).

### AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Bucolic scenes, romantic vistas, and views of Venice abound in **Christie's** sale of nineteenth-century European art (April 19); so do such softly feminine women as the subject of Bouguereau's late canvas "La Vague," sweetly reposing (and unabashedly nude) on a beach. On April 24, the New York branch holds its first auction dedicated to Russian art, offering paintings (such as Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovskii's *dramatic* seascape "Moonlight") and decorative objects; among the highlights are works from the collection of Ambassador Charles R. Crane, a legendary Eastern Europe hand. A sale of photographs on April 24-25 includes works by Mapplethorpe, Cunningham, Arbus, and Stieglitz. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's** auction of photographs on April 22 includes prints from the collection of 7-Eleven, Inc.; the highlights include a full sequence of five images by Ansel Adams, depicting the shifting patterns of surf along the San Mateo County coastline, and an amazing image by Edward Weston, in which the tortured surface of a pepper assumes almost human qualities. Gigantic diamonds (one weighing in at more than a hundred carats) take center stage at a sale of jewelry on April 25, followed by a feel-good sale of nineteenth-century European art and sporting paintings on the same day. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)



TOMER HANUKA

## ON THE HORIZON

### CLASSICAL MUSIC
### THE PETER PRINCIPLE

*May 5*

Peter Serkin, one of the world's most comprehensive pianists, uses Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata to anchor a program at Carnegie Hall that stretches back to Bach and Byrd and forward to Elliott Carter (a New York première). (212-247-7800.)

### MOVIES
### BROKEN SHADOWS

*May 5-June 15*

With a program of seventy B-movie film noirs made between 1944 and 1964, Film Forum offers six weeks of violence, mystery, passion, and paranoia. The titles alone are the stuff of nightmares, from such classics as "Gun Crazy" and "Kiss Me Deadly" to brilliant obscurities like "On Dangerous Ground," "Murder by Contract," and "Slightly Scarlet," plus, for comic relief, "I Was a Communist for the FBI." (212-727-8110.)

### ART
### BEFORE THE SPORK

*May 5-Oct. 29*

The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum's "Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500-2005" will examine social and design history with a collection of dining implements that includes soup tureens, ice-cream scoops, travelling flatware, and grape shears. (212-849-8300.)

### THE THEATRE
### SPRING FEVER

*May 18*

Duncan Sheik provides the pop rock for "Spring Awakening," a new musical based on Frank Wedekind's controversial 1891 play about adolescent sexuality, at the Atlantic Theatre Company. Steven Sater (book and lyrics) has contemporized Wedekind's work; Frank Wood leads the cast of fourteen. (212-239-6200.)

### NIGHT LIFE
### GOT THE BEAT

*May 19*

In the early eighties, the Go-Go's topped the charts with their début album, "Beauty and the Beat," and went on to notch several classic hits. The all-girl group has been an on-again, off-again act since its Reagan-era heyday, but the original lineup is back together for a twenty-fifth-anniversary tour that brings it to Times Square's Nokia Theatre. (212-307-7171.)

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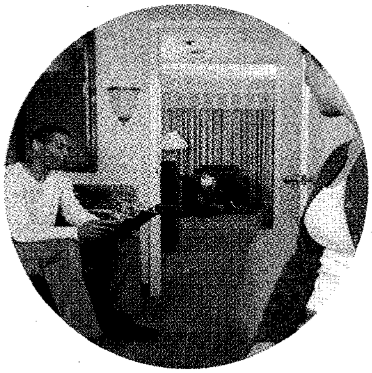

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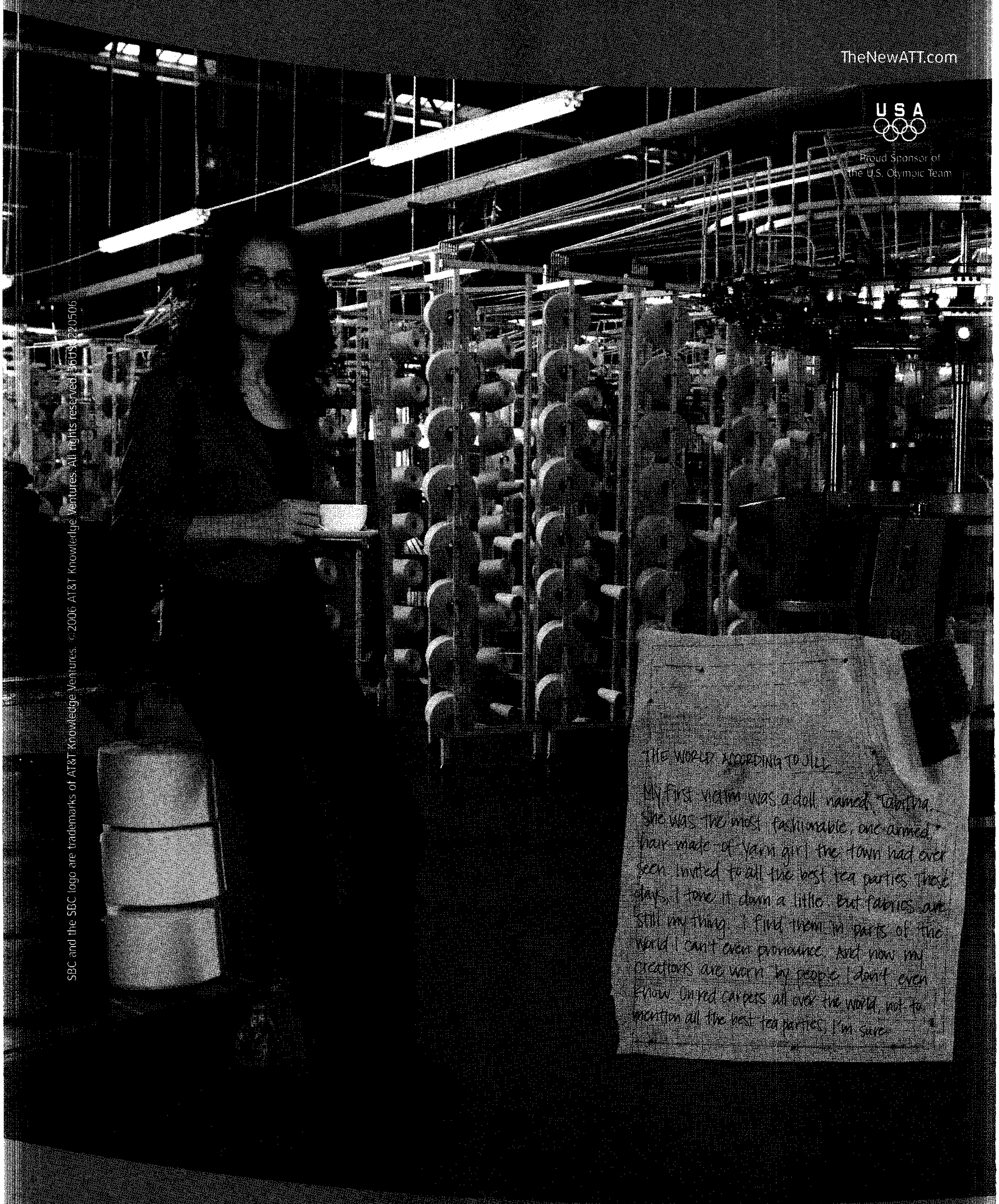TheNewATT.com

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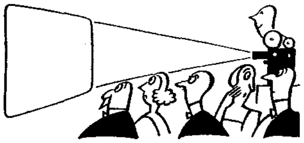
THE NEW YORKER

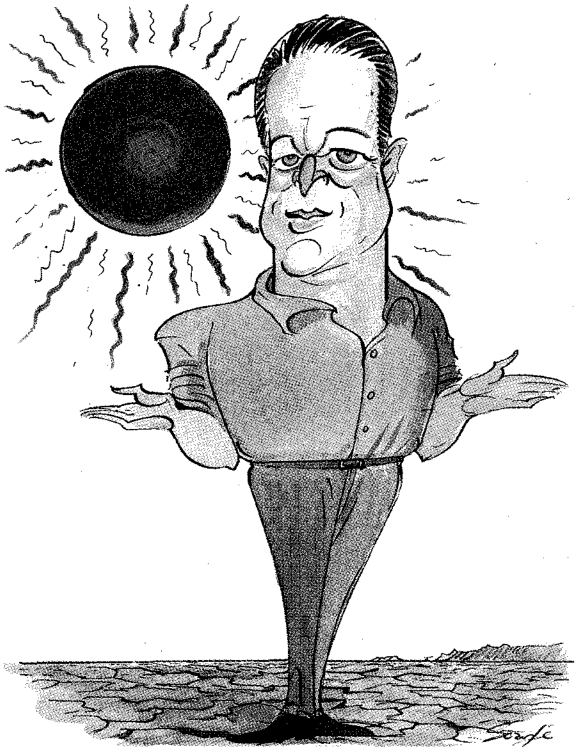
# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

## COMMENT
## OZONE MAN



The imminence of catastrophic global warming may be a subject far from the ever-drifting mind of President Bush—whose eschatological preoccupations privilege Armageddon over the Flood—but it is of growing concern to the rest of humanity. Climate change is even having its mass-entertainment moment. "Ice Age: The Meltdown"—featuring Ellie the computer-animated mammoth and the bottomless voice of Queen Latifah—has taken in more than a hundred million dollars at the box office in two weeks. On the same theme, but with distinctly less animation, "An Inconvenient Truth," starring Al Gore (playing the role of Al Gore, itinerant lecturer), is coming to a theatre near you around Memorial Day. Log on to Fandango. Reserve some seats. Bring the family. It shouldn't be missed. No kidding.

"An Inconvenient Truth" is not likely to displace the boffo numbers of "Ice Age" in *Variety's* weekly grosses. It is, to be perfectly honest (and there is no way of getting around this), a documentary film about a possibly retired politician giving a slide show about the dangers of melting ice sheets and rising sea levels. It has a few lapses of mise en scène. Sometimes we see Gore gravely talking on his cell phone—or gravely staring out an airplane window, or gravely tapping away on his laptop in a lonely hotel room—for a little longer than is absolutely necessary. And yet, as a means of education, "An Inconvenient Truth" is a brilliantly lucid, often riveting attempt to warn Americans off our hellbent path to global suicide. "An Inconvenient Truth" is not the most entertaining film of the year. But it might be the most important.



The catch, of course, is that the audience-of-one that most urgently needs to see the film and take it to heart—namely, the man who beat Gore in the courts six years ago—does not much believe in science or, for that matter, in any information that disturbs his prejudices, his fantasies, or his sleep. Inconvenient truths are precisely what this White House is structured to avoid and deny.

In the 1992 campaign against Bill Clinton, George H. W. Bush mocked Gore as "ozone man" and claimed, "This guy is so far out in the environmental extreme we'll be up to our necks in owls and outta work for every American." In the 2000 campaign, George W. Bush cracked that Gore "likes electric cars. He just doesn't like making electricity." The younger Bush, a classic schoolyard bully with a contempt for intellect, demanded that Gore "explain what he meant by some of the things" in his 1992 book, "Earth in the Balance"—and then unashamedly admitted that he had never read it. A book that the President did eventually read and endorse is a pulp science-fiction novel: "State of Fear," by Michael Crichton. Bush was so excited by the story, which pictures global warming as a hoax perpetrated by power-mad environmentalists, that he invited the author to the Oval Office. In "Rebel-in-Chief: Inside the Bold and Controversial

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GERALD SCARFE

Presidency of George W. Bush,” Fred Barnes, the Fox News commentator, reveals that the President and Crichton “talked for an hour and were in near-total agreement.” The visit, Barnes adds, “was not made public for fear of outraging environmentalists all the more.”

As President, Bush has made fantasy a guide to policy. He has scorned the Kyoto agreement on global warming (a pact that Gore helped broker as Vice-President); he has neutered the Environmental Protection Agency; he has failed to act decisively on America’s fuel-efficiency standards even as the European Union, Japan, and China have tightened theirs. He has filled his Administration with people like Philip A. Cooney, who, in 2001, left the American Petroleum Institute, the umbrella lobby for the oil industry, to become chief of staff for the White House Council on Environmental Quality, where he repeatedly edited government documents so as to question the link between fuel emissions and climate change. In 2005, when Cooney left the White House (this time for a job with ExxonMobil), Dana Perino, a White House spokesperson, told the *Times*, “Phil Cooney did a great job.” A heckuva job, one might say.

Last week, Gore dropped by a Broadway screening room to introduce a preview of “An Inconvenient Truth.” Dressed in casual but non-earth-tone clothes, he gave a brief, friendly greeting. If you are inclined to think that the unjustly awarded election of 2000 led to one of the worst Presidencies of this or any other era, it is not easy to look at Al Gore. He is the living reminder of all that might not have happened in the past six years (and of what might still happen in the coming two). Contrary to Ralph Nader’s credo that there was no real difference between the major parties, it is close to inconceivable that the country and the world would not be in far better shape had Gore been allowed to assume the office that a plurality of voters wished him to have. One can imagine him as an intelligent and decent President, capable of making serious decisions and explaining them in the language of a confident adult. Imagining that alternative history is hard to bear, which is why Gore always has the courtesy, in his many speeches, and at the start of “An Inconvenient Truth,” to deflect that discomfort with a joke: “Hello, I’m Al Gore and I used to be the next President of the United States.”

Those inclined to be irritated by Gore all over again will not be entirely disappointed by “An Inconvenient Truth.” It can be argued that at times the film becomes “Death of a Salesman,” with Gore as global warming’s Willy Loman, wheeling his bag down one more airport walkway. There are some awkward jokes, a silly cartoon, a few self-regarding sequences, and, now and then, echoes of the cringe-making moments in his old campaign speeches when personal tragedy was put to questionable use. (To illustrate the need to change one’s mind when hard reality intrudes, he recalls helping his father farm tobacco as a youth and then his sister’s death from lung cancer.) But in the context of the larger political moment, the current darkness, Gore can be forgiven his miscues and vanities. It is past time to recognize that, over a long career, his policy judgment and his moral judgment alike have been admirable and acute. Gore has been right about global warming since holding the first congressional hearing on the topic, twenty-six years ago. He was right about the role of the Internet, right about the need to reform welfare and cut the federal deficit, right about confronting Slobodan Milosevic in Bosnia and Kosovo. Since September 11th, he has been right about constitutional abuse, right about warrantless domestic spying, and right about the calamity of sanctioned torture. And in the case of Iraq, both before the invasion and after, he was right—courageously right—to distrust as fatally flawed the political and moral good faith, operational competence, and strategic wisdom of the Bush Administration.

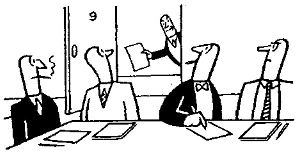
In the 2000 campaign, Gore was cautious, self-censoring, and in the thrall of his political consultants. He was even cautious about his passion, the environment. That caution, some of his critics think, may have cost him Florida, where he was reluctant to speak out on the construction of an ecologically disastrous airport in the middle of the Everglades and Biscayne National Parks. But since the election—especially since emerging from an understandable period of reticence and rebalancing—Gore has played a noble role in public life. It’s hardly to Gore’s discredit that many conservative commentators have watched his emotionally charged speeches and pronounced him unhinged. (“It looks as if Al Gore has gone off his lithium again,” the columnist and former psychiatrist Charles Krauthammer wrote after one such oration.)

It may be that Gore really has lost his taste for electoral politics, and that, no matter what turn the polls and events take, an Al-versus-Hillary psychodrama in 2008 is not going to happen. There is no substitute for Presidential power, but Gore is now playing a unique role in public life. He is a symbol of what might have been, who insists that we focus on what likely will be an uninhabitable planet if we fail to pay attention to the folly we are committing, and take the steps necessary to end it.

—*David Remnick*

## WHO’S ON FIRST DEPT.

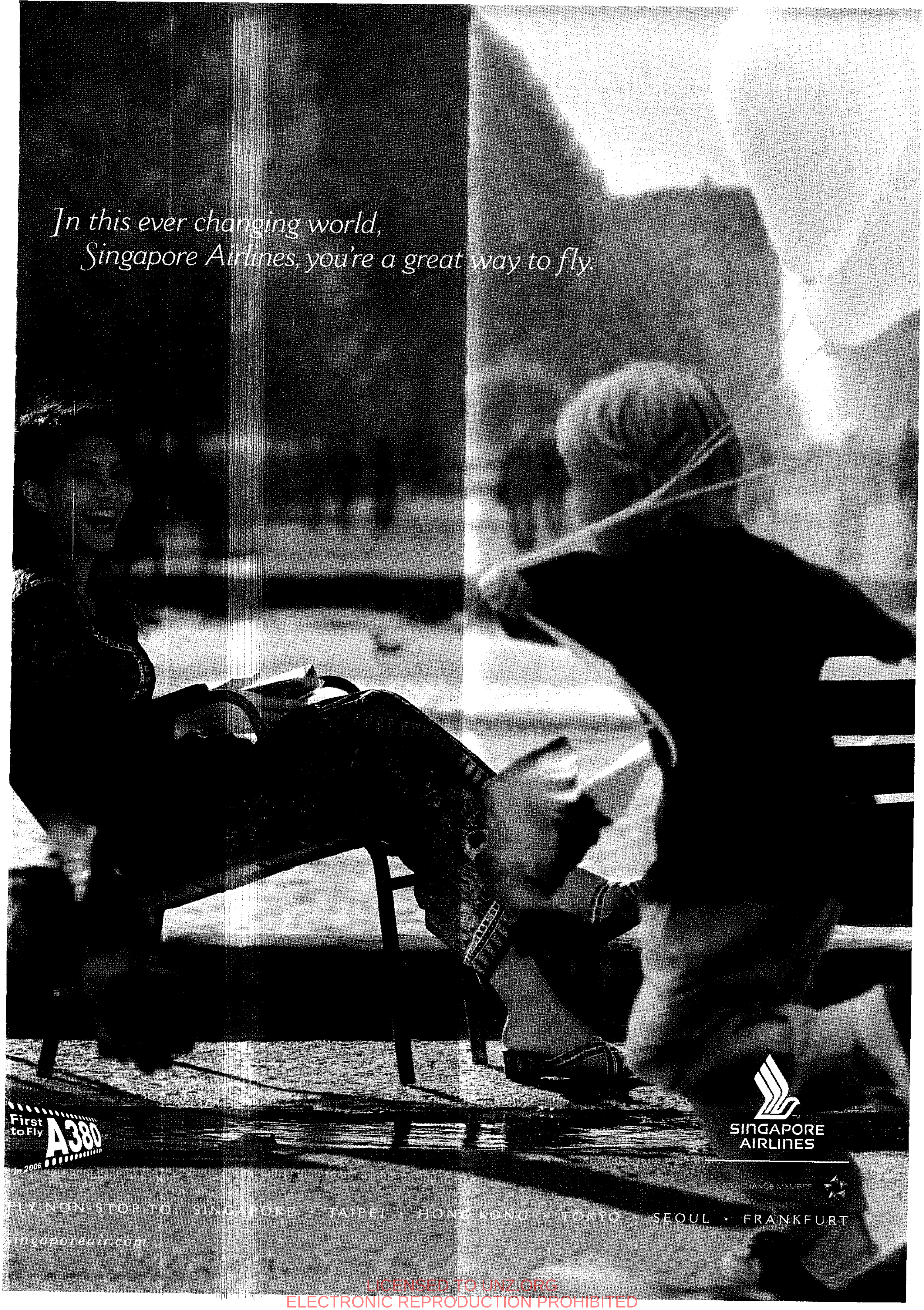
### SHOWS ABOUT SHOWS



At “Saturday Night Live,” when two writers come up with the same sketch idea—Hey, we should do Dick Cheney shooting his buddy in the face!—the sketches are said to be “bumping” to get on the air: usually, only one succeeds. Now two promising TV pilots loosely inspired by the backstage goings on at “S.N.L.” are themselves bumping to get on NBC’s fall schedule.

Aaron Sorkin, the creator of “The West Wing,” has written “Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip,” starring Matthew Perry and Bradley Whitford as a creative team that’s called in to rescue the network’s signature live sketch-comedy show. Tina Fey, the “S.N.L.” star, has written a show called—for now—“The Untitled Tina Fey Project,” starring Tina Fey, of all people, as the head writer at the network’s live variety show. Her pilot features Alec Baldwin as the network’s meddlesome new “V.P. of development for NBC/GE/Universal/Kmart.”

Fey’s comedy is set in New York at a fictional NBC, and Sorkin’s drama is set in Los Angeles at a slightly more fictional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NBS, but both feature network heavies named Jack. Kevin Reilly, the real-life president of NBC Entertainment (which is a division of General Electric and a sister company of Universal but is not, as of this writing, affiliated with Kmart), explains, "Jack was G.E.'s pre-approved network executive name." More seriously, he says that when both scripts arrived on his desk, last fall, "I saw the problem coming from a mile away. But these are very particular artists, who write what they care about. They're not writers for hire who say, 'Whattya got—a boy and his dog? I'll write that!' " Reilly is at pains to note that neither show is based on actual NBC dynamics and that each is tonally distinct: "Tina is more madcap, and Aaron is exploring issues and character dynamics and has a real romance at the center." Sorkin's pilot begins with Wes, the executive producer of NBS's show, reacting to a censor's decision to kill a sketch called "Crazy Christians" by addressing the camera and urging viewers to turn off their sets:

WES

We're eating worms for money. . . . Guys are getting killed in a war that's got theme music and a logo. That remote in your hand is a crack pipe [that profits] this prissy, feckless, off-the-charts greed-filled whorehouse of a network you're watching.

"That part," Reilly acknowledges, "is based on us."

Lorne Michaels, the longtime executive producer of "S.N.L.," is also an executive producer of Fey's pilot. When Sorkin asked Michaels to permit him to observe "S.N.L." for a week, Michaels, protecting his turf, declined. "I haven't read Sorkin's script," he says, "but God knows I've been told about it. Since we do sketches about Christians all the time, I guess he's going for a bigger set of issues, his characteristic subject being power and its responsibilities. But is this a new insight, that networks are not to be trusted?" Michaels goes on, "The reality is that the network isn't that powerful anymore—talent is."

Fey's pilot takes a swipe at talent in a scene in which Liz, the head writer, meets with Tracy, an unhinged movie star whom her new boss wants as a regular on the show. Tracy takes her for a ride in his red Hummer:

LIZ

This is a great car. What does it run on? Jet fuel?

TRACY

It runs on fame juice.

LIZ

Wonderful.

Alec Baldwin, who has hosted "S.N.L." twelve times, says, "I'd be stunned if NBC picked up both shows. And ours has the tougher task, as a comedy, because if it's not funny, that's it. Whereas a drama can start off as a hard-hitting medical show about real issues, and before you count to three it's about who's fucking who." Tina Fey, taking a somewhat higher road, says, "It's just bad luck for me that in my first attempt at prime time I'm going up against the most powerful writer on television. I was joking that this would be the best pilot ever aired on Trio"—a cable channel, owned by NBC Universal, that ran failed shows. "And then Trio got cancelled."

Tina Fey

Sorkin, taking an even higher road, one dictated by his studio, Warner Bros. Television, a unit of Time Warner (which is also not, as of this writing, connected with Kmart), was unavailable for comment. But Kevin Reilly says that NBC might well have room for both shows, particularly if Fey's ends up as a midseason replacement. "The only way we could screw it up," he says, "is if the audience gets confused."

Networks being what they are, Fey suspects that confusion is inevitable: "We'll probably end up doing a terrible crossover, where the Matthew Perry character on the drama rapes my character on the comedy—and then the 'Law & Order' team solves the crime."

—*Tad Friend*

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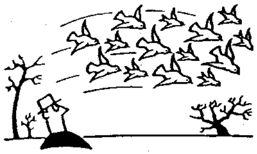
## BACK FROM IRAQ
## BIRDS OF AMERICA



Camp Anaconda, one of the largest American military bases in Iraq, is about forty miles north of Baghdad, near the Tigris River. It is a favorite target of insurgents' artillery attacks—its twenty thousand residents call it Mortaritaville. It also happens to be a good place for birding, as Sergeant Jonathan Trouern-Trend discovered during the year he was deployed there, with the Connecticut National Guard.

In March, 2004, shortly after he arrived, Trouern-Trend started writing a blog about the wildlife he saw, mainly birds, but also other animals and plants. Trouern-Trend, who began keeping a life list when he was twelve, soon identified two good spots for birding inside the wire: by the laundry-runoff pond, and around the camp's dump, which spouted a column of black smoke day and night. Trouern-Trend contrived ways to spend a lot of time at each spot. He was working in intelligence, so his superiors never questioned what he was doing with a pair of binoculars. "I'm not sure what they think when I'm looking up in a tree," he wrote in the blog. He reported sightings of whiskered terns and white-cheeked bulbuls (which reminded him of Tennyson's "Recollections of the Arabian Nights"—"The living airs of middle night / Died round the bulbul as he sung"), along with a few white-breasted kingfishers, a squacco heron, a purple swamphen, and a spectacular hoo-

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poe—a crested, buff-colored bird with Escher-like black-and-white markings on its wings. "I spent 10 minutes watching it hop around in the mud . . . erecting its crest in its full glory," he wrote.

Camp Anaconda is in the middle of a migration route for species that breed in Europe and western Russia, and winter in Africa or the Middle East. It was oddly moving to Trouern-Trend (and to readers of his blog) to realize that the traditional migration was occurring overhead even as everything on the ground seemed to be falling apart. Toward the end of his tour, he conducted Anaconda's first Christmas Bird Count. In May, Sierra Club Books will publish "Birding Babylon," a slender, handsomely illustrated distillation of the blog.

Trouern-Trend, who is thirty-eight, is back home in Connecticut now, where he lives with his wife and five young children and works as an epidemiology researcher. The other day, he drove to the New Jersey Meadowlands to do some birding with Nick Vos-Wein, of the Hackensack Riverkeeper organization. Trouern-Trend was hoping to start off the spring by seeing a yellow-crowned night heron. He had never birded in the Meadowlands, and, in spite of his time in Mortaritaville, he seemed a little apprehensive. "This is where they dump the bodies in 'The Sopranos,' right?" he asked, as he and Vos-Wein paddled a canoe out into the choppy Hackensack River.

Vos-Wein told him about various programs designed to reclaim the Jersey Meadowlands, which were long used as New York City's dump. "A Tigris Riverkeeper—maybe that's what we need," Trouern-Trend said. He is hoping that his blog will heighten environmental awareness among Iraqis, especially in the fragile ecology of the Tigris meadows.

From the middle of the Hackensack, one could see three huge landfills, now closed, ringing a little park. Downriver, there was a former chromate chemical factory. The mudflats seemed to glisten with a poisonous chromium sheen.

But there were lots of birds, especially in the high brown reeds of the meadows on the far side of the river.

"That's a turkey vulture!" Trouern-Trend cried.

"Harrier," Vos-Wein called out. "Moorhen."

"I saw its cousin in Iraq."

Trouern-Trend said that many of the birds he saw in Iraq were similar to birds he knew from home, and that the connection had helped him to acclimate to life on the base. "Birding is about making connections," he said. "It is a mark of civil society." He added that Iraq would be a wonderful place for eco-tourist birding trips: "There are flamingos, crested larks, and a chance of seeing a sacred ibis in the marshes."

"Look," Vos-Wein said, and pointed to a huge yellow-crowned night heron, majestically gliding over the former dump.

—*John Seabrook*

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## THE NEW PAGE SIX

### Everybody ♥ DeLay

How great a guy is **Tom DeLay**? He is a class act who continues to earn the respect of everyone he meets with a double dose of charm and wit. This is one politico who's simpatico. (Full disclosure: We love our new **Armani** sweater vests!)

### Charlize Angel!

Actually-very-smart sex goddess **Charlize Theron** (full disclosure: She is loaning us her Miami duplex) has Broadway audiences agog with her performance as **Ivana Trump** in the new musical "Trump!" Among the opening-night swells, our spies tell us, was **The Deadbeat Donald** himself (did he get breast implants?), who thinks that gift certificates to Filene's Basement still hold sway in swagland. Also attending was **Alec Baldwin**, the BLOVIATOR, or should we say the NEVER-PAY-OLATOR, who, according to insiders, is still heartbroken over his decades-old bust-up with the luscious **Kim Basinger**, whom we recently vacationed on in Cabo.

### Sweet Suite Deal

Just when sources say the world has seen enough of party princess **Paris Hilton**, there she is again. The hot-bodded celebutante sure looked like a billion bucks the other evening on the deck of gazillionaire **Paul Allen's** yacht, as seen from the terrace of the Page Six suite at the St. Petersburg Hilton. (Full disclosure: This column is being typed on generously donated computers using an early version of Microsoft Word.)

### Jared's a Jolie Good Fellow

Tongues are wagging that *va-va-voom* vixen **Angelina Jolie's** new baby looks remarkably like Page Six's own **Jared Paul Stern**. Could it be that the lovelier half of **Brangelina** traded some power canoodling for honorable mentions? (Full disclosure: Yes.)

### Hawking Squawking

Nitwit science nerd **Stephen Hawking**, the NEW BLOVIATOR, who made a major gaffe in his assessment that no particle could escape from a black hole—a blunder that continues to haunt and worry our staff—thinks he can bounce checks all over the press and not get back some negative ions. It's a good guess that a black hole is where **Quanta-goof's** invitation to Cannes wound up this year, and that's one thing that's not coming back atcha.

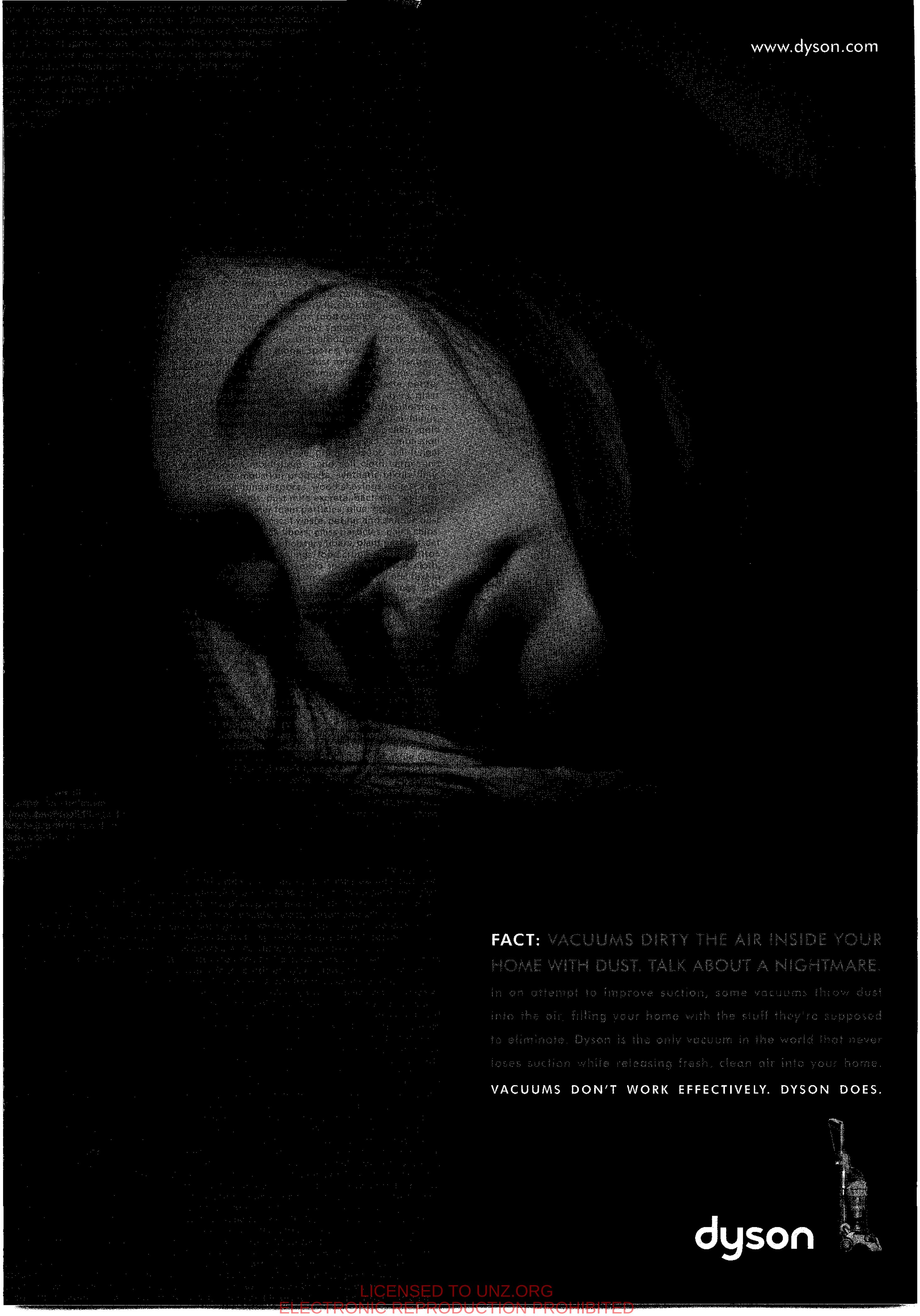
### Later, Late Show

**David Letterman**, the poor man's **Alan Thicke** (full disclosure: Dave refused to match our Oscar gift basket), made a snide joke on his show about Page Six appearing not on page 6 but on page 12. Yeah, well, so? The reason that Page Six appears on page 12 is that we are getting a regular envelope under the door from the Committee to Promote the Number Twelve, and it would be too confusing to our readers to change the name of the column to Page Twelve, and, anyway, we are also receiving a tasty monthly contribution from the Society to Promote the Number Six.

### Just Asking . . .

What investment-savvy white-haired comedian is looking to toss *mucho dinero* toward a clothing line designed by a journalist? Rumor has it he thinks that fancy clothes buy him fancy press. Well, what'll it be, **Tut**—cuffs or no cuffs?

—*Steve Martin*



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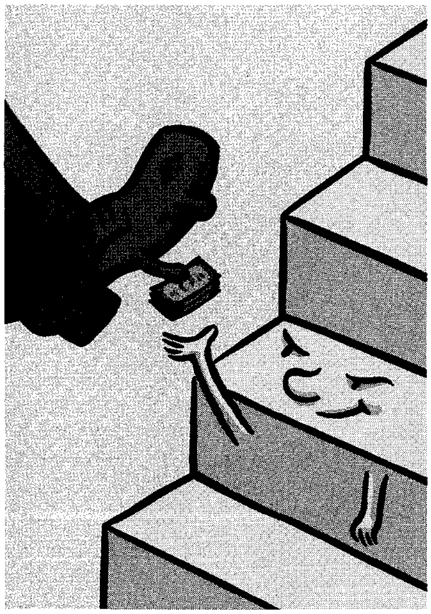
# THE FINANCIAL PAGE
# THE PAYOLA GAME

In the final years of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, he earned more than $1.8 billion in kickbacks as a result of the United Nations' oil-for-food program. He brought in billions more by smuggling oil out to Jordan and Syria. Across the country, graft was a precondition of doing business. Saddam's exit and the arrival of free-market reforms were supposed to change all this; Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi spoke of an era of "transparency, accountability, and value for money." Yet corruption remains ubiquitous. In the past couple of years, more than a billion dollars has gone missing from Iraq's Defense Ministry. Hundreds of millions are being skimmed off the country's oil sales. Banks, utility companies, and passport offices routinely require baksheesh to get things done. Transparency International, in its latest survey of perceived global corruption, labelled Iraq the most corrupt country in the Middle East.

This is hardly surprising. Corruption usually flourishes in the wake of an authoritarian regime's collapse. The fall of the Soviet Union gave rise to an epidemic of graft in Russia and other former Soviet republics. When it's unclear who's in charge, rules become open to manipulation, and bureaucrats, uncertain about their jobs, tend to put their own short-term interests first. In Iraq, these problems have been exacerbated by other factors. The intense competition to control the nation's oil reserves creates ample opportunities for skimming—indeed, economies that depend heavily on natural resources are generally more corrupt, as are wartime economies.

Corruption may be ethically unsavory, but, according to some economists, it may also be economically beneficial. In a country where elaborate bureaucracies make it hard to start companies, import or export goods, or simply get a passport, bribes can cut through red tape, serving as what's called "speed money." Bribes can also motivate bureaucrats who would otherwise shirk their duties; in the Russia of Peter the Great, for instance, most officials received small salaries and made up the difference with bribes. And corruption isn't necessarily an obstacle to economic growth. In the postwar years, countries like South Korea and Indonesia were bastions of cronyism and graft but saw their economies boom; today, China and India are two of the world's fastest-growing economies, and both receive poor grades from Transparency International. So perhaps Iraq's Commission on Public Integrity should simply accept that corruption provides the grease to keep the wheels of commerce turning.

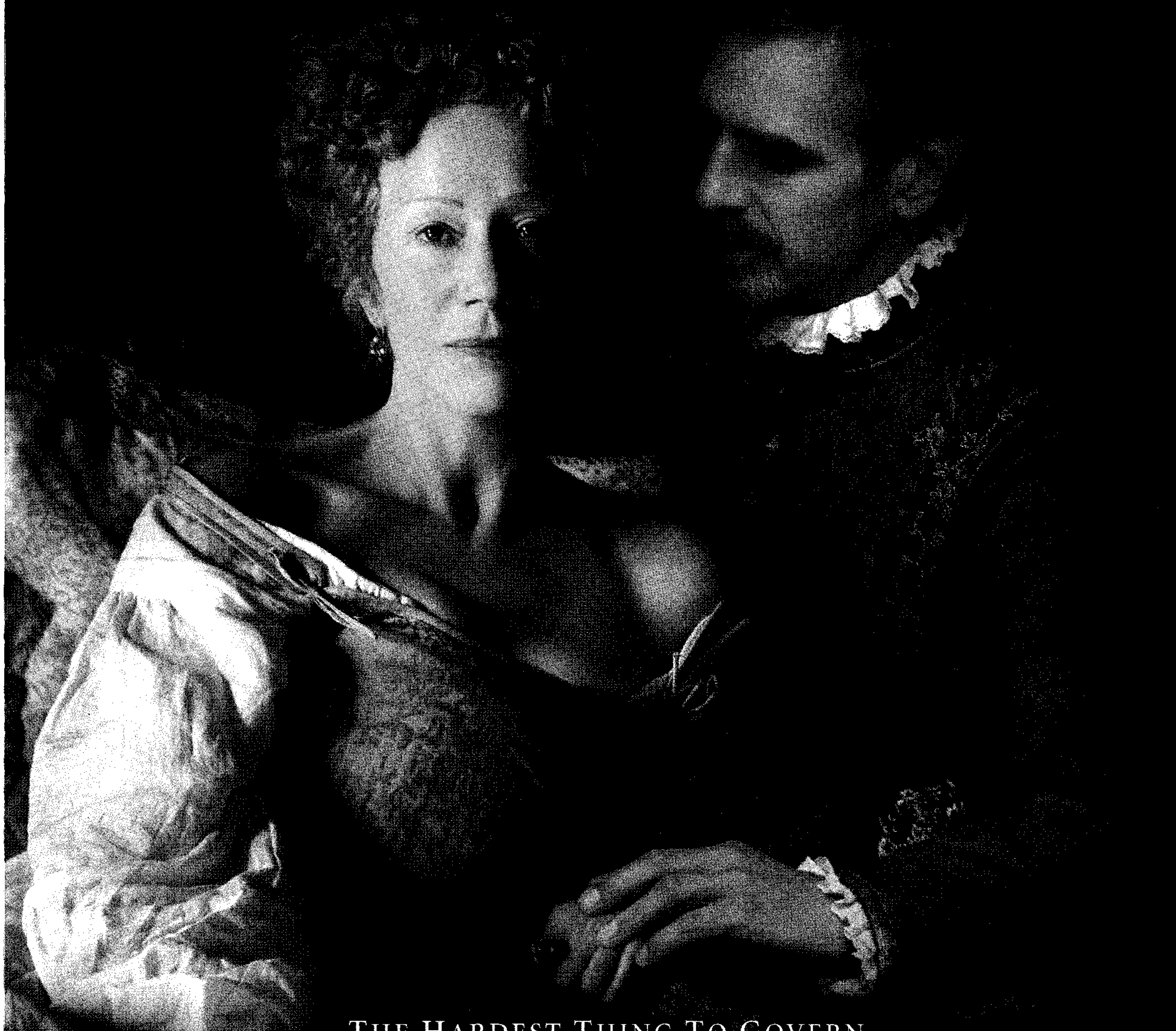
It would be comforting to think so. And there are conditions under which bribes seem to work well. When power is in the hands of an authoritarian government that keeps bureaucrats under firm control, the state is able to act like a smart monopolist: its employees charge prices that are high but not too high, and are able to deliver what they promise. So bribe-takers collect what amounts to an unofficial tax and bribers get what they pay for. In a country like Iraq, though, where the state is weakened, corruption tends to be more anarchic and less effective. Instead of monopolistic corruption—a single bribe-taker representing the government—you get competitive corruption: everyone has his hand out. A study of what it took to open a business in Russia in 1991, for instance, found that bribes had to be paid to local and national officials, fire inspectors, the water department, and so on. Apart from the sheer expense, in a situation like this it's unclear whether a bribe will have any effect. As a result, people either decide against doing business in the first place or are driven underground, into the so-called "shadow economy."



Furthermore, even if corruption can be a useful means of bypassing inefficiencies in the short term, in the long term it tends to create inefficiencies of its own. Bribing, it turns out, doesn't always speed things up: in a vast study of twenty-four hundred companies in fifty-eight countries, Daniel Kaufmann, of the World Bank, and Shang-Jin Wei, of the I.M.F., found that the more a company had to bribe, the more time it spent tied up in negotiations with bureaucrats. Graft also encourages government officials to keep complicated procedures in place, since that insures that the bribes keep coming. So corruption isn't just a product of bad institutions and policies; it also helps cause them. Almost every study done in the past ten years has found that, on the whole, corrupt countries grow more slowly and have a much harder time attracting foreign investment. And work by Wei suggests that even the exceptions, like China, have probably succeeded more in spite of corruption than because of it.

Fighting corruption, then, is not only an ethical issue but an economic one. The problem is that most anti-corruption campaigns fail. In part, that's because the task is absurdly hard. But it may also be because anti-corruption campaigns tend to target low-level corruption rather than attacking what economists call "grand corruption." Relying on a variant of the "broken windows" theory, these campaigns have assumed that cleaning up day-to-day graft will make all corruption less acceptable. Yet a study by the economist Eric Uslaner shows that it's high-level graft that really shapes citizens' perceptions of how corrupt their society is. Corruption fighters in Iraq, in other words, should ignore the greedy bureaucrats at the electric company and concentrate, instead, on holding high-level officials accountable for the billion dollars missing from the Defense Ministry. Granted, this is probably an unrealistic goal. But in Iraq today what isn't?

—*James Surowiecki*



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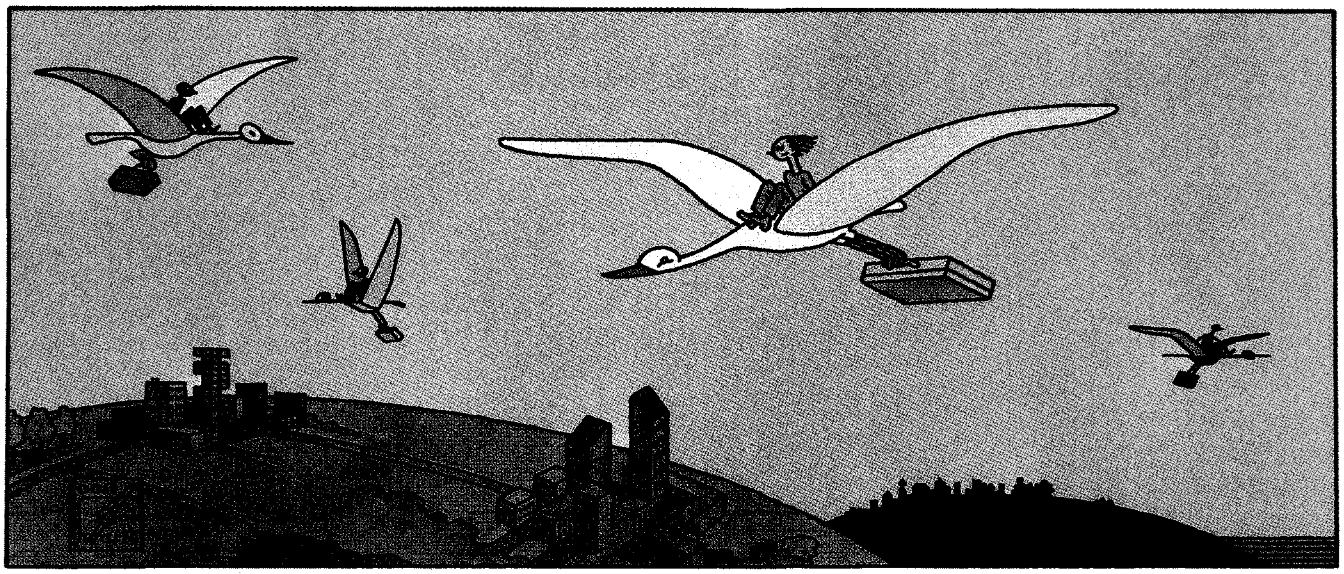
### EUROPEAN JOURNAL

# HIGH AND LOW

*Flying on the really cheap.*

### BY ANTHONY LANE



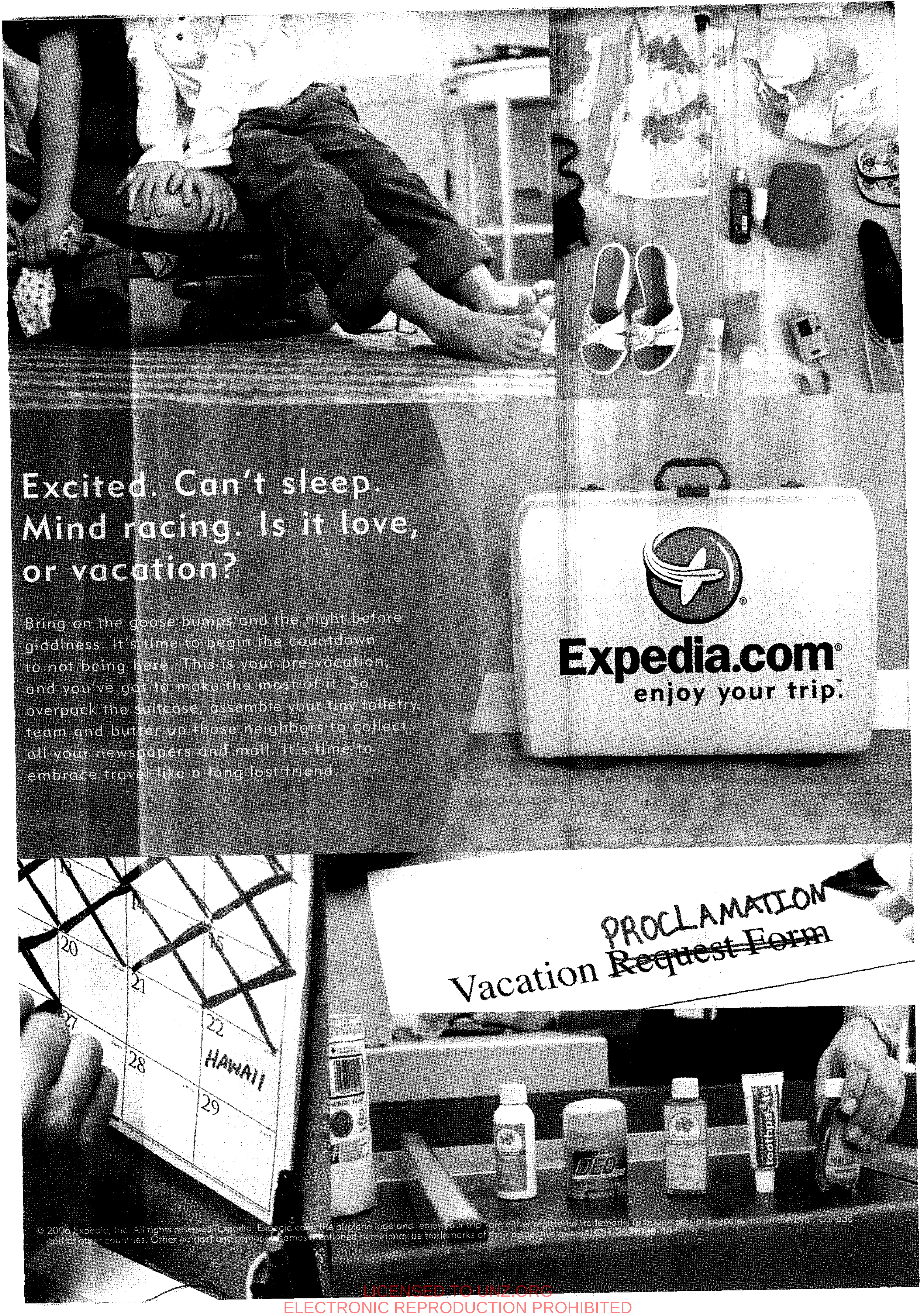
*European travel, in its new and loosely regimented form, spirits us, without ado, from one small world to another.*

JOOST SWARTE

Waking up the other day, on April 6th, I didn't know where I was. This is a common occurrence for many people, mainly in the wake of an office party, but at least they could jab a finger at a globe and hit the right country. Even that was beyond me. Some hours before, I had boarded a plane at Stansted, an airport to the northeast of London. My destination was Vitoria-Gasteiz, a place I had never heard of, whose grid reference, climate, cuisine, night life, fauna, and geological foundation I had made no attempt to discover. The name itself was mystifying, starting with a hint of the Iberian but veering off toward the crunchingly Teutonic; it sounded more like a rare medical condition than a popular holiday spot. ("Though left largely impotent by the onset of Vitoria-Gasteiz syndrome, he nonetheless enjoyed a varied social life.") I knew it lay within Europe, but apart from that I was surrendering to what the Defense Department would classify as voluntary rendition. This ominous sensation was hardly eased by the one detail I had learned about Vitoria-Gasteiz as I was booking the flight: nearby lay several natural parks, including "Gorbeia, Urkiola, and Izki." What was I heading for? Mordor?

Nothing became clearer on arrival. I entered the terminal building and found a sign that read "EBtik kanpoko herritarrak." The thought that I had stumbled into a tiny, undiscovered pocket of Inuit culture, guaranteed to throw anthropologists into disarray, was too exciting for words. The translation underneath read "Non-EU residents." So what was the language? The immigration official said "Plizz," and examined my passport with slightly less attention than he would apply to his toenails. I had no luggage, so I walked outside, found a cab rank composed of one taxi, said "Vitoria-Gasteiz," and, fifteen minutes later, found myself in the heart of an indecipherable town. I paid the taxi fare in euros, which were accepted without demur; this proved that I wasn't in, say, Lithuania, but I could still be in any of the twelve countries where the European single currency is used. I meandered along, trying to gauge the accents of passersby. There was a place called Tabakoak, which is enough to make anyone give up smoking. People were drinking in Café Dublin, which wasn't much help; nor was the street sign, up a hill, that read "San Frantzisko Xabier Kantoia." Depleted by the onslaught of consonants, I checked in to a hotel, hailing the manageress from the next room, where she was doing the ironing and watching TV. She wrote "31 euros" on a scrap of paper (that would be roughly the same in dollars), and I nodded, hoping vaguely that she hadn't just sold me her daughter. I found my room, kicked off my shoes, and, even though it was midafternoon, fell asleep.

I woke an hour later, opened the curtains, and saw a palm tree. My guess had been that Vitoria-Gasteiz was somewhere in the Dolomites, or on the border between the German and Italian sectors of Switzerland, but this was evidently not so. Leaving the hotel, I passed a sex shop, a jeweller's, and a bridal-wear specialist—the story of our adult lives, in the space of fifty yards. Across the road, rearing out of nowhere, was a vision: an art museum, spacious and spotless, that must have been completed no earlier than the previous Monday. Two minutes later, I found myself—the sole visitor in the building—gazing at a Motherwell, a Basquiat, a weird and waxy de Kooning, and an intricate, child-pleasing set of twelve Kandinsky prints, titled



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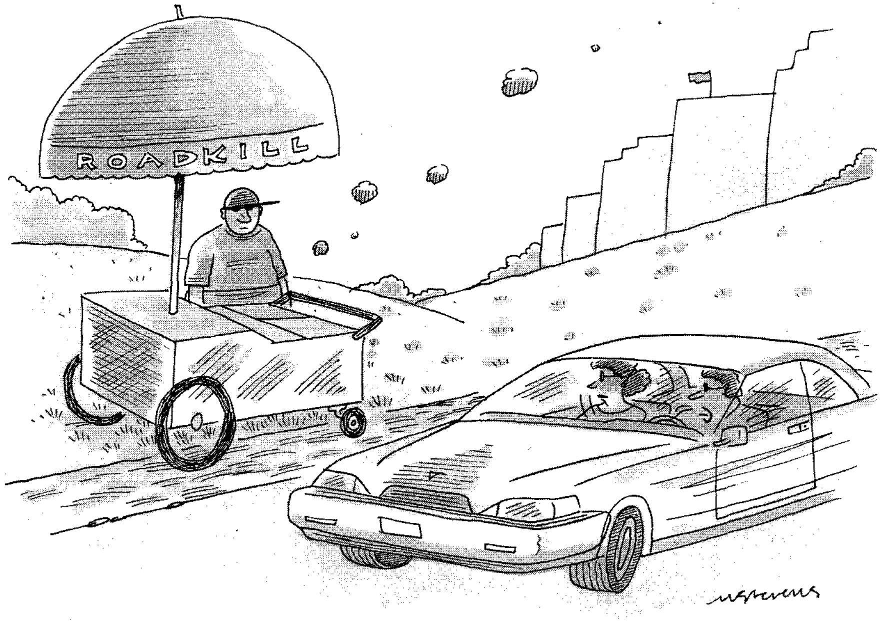
“Small Worlds.” I could have been in Santa Fe.

Such are the delights of European travel, in its new and loosely regimented form: it spirits us, without ado, from one small world to another, urging us to forge the links between them. On this occasion, I had imposed deliberate ignorance upon myself, but that was merely a hard-core version of the shock—the bewildering, shipwrecked charm—that greets us every time we come ashore in an unfamiliar land and ask, “What country, friends, is this?” The answer came to me as I sat at a café table, in the warm afternoon, in an eighteenth-century square: this must be a Basque region of northern Spain. (The Álava, as it turned out.) I listened to the bells competing to strike six o’clock and watched the same procession that I have witnessed, over the years, from Berlin to Taormina: knots of friends and relations, orbited by children, unhurriedly taking the air. More than any other ritual, it marks a division between the Continent and the more headlong purposes of the Anglo-American model—between the why-worry and the can-do. One might envy the strollers, but one can never fully participate in the stroll; to witness it, however, remains a privilege, and I will pay good money to do so. The money I had paid on this occasion was certainly good. My *té con leche* had set me back a dollar, and, as for my flight from London to Vitoria-Gasteiz, it had cost one British penny. Or, according to the rate of exchange, one and three-quarters cents.

Flying around Europe used to be a cumbersome affair. It was patchy, overpriced, and weighed down by state monopolies. A few big players, such as Air France, Swissair, and Alitalia, carved up the route map and, if earnings sank, relied on their respective governments to bail them out. They enjoyed at best a grumpy public confidence, but not an ounce of public affection. And so it was that, of the many terrible consequences of September 11th, perhaps the least mourned was the demise of Sabena, the Belgian national airline. To say that it went broke, laid low by the dip in air travel, should not be taken to mean that it had, until then, been buoyantly solvent. In fact, in eighty years of trading, Sabena had never once turned a profit, thus becoming a byword for the staleness of the fixed market. All airlines suffer from cruel abbreviations; as a plane-mad nine-year-old, I regaled my parents with B.O.A.C. (Better on a Camel) and T.W.A. (Teeny-Weeny Airlines). Sabena was even better. In travellers’ patois, it stood for Same Awful Bloody Experience, Never Again.

The entire industry, in short, was ripe not so much for a makeover as for mass euthanasia, followed by the birth of something new. This would be modelled, if possible, on the success of Southwest Airlines, but with a pleasing twist: Fly an hour from Kansas City and you will find yourself under similar skies, with little need to alter your dress code, your diet, your speech, or your point of view. Fly the same distance from Geneva and you can wind up on the Mediterranean, chomping seafood in the shade. Responsibility for this mass displacement fell mainly to two new operators, easyJet and Ryanair. (Other contenders, including Buzz and a British Airways subsidiary named Go, have come and gone.) EasyJet ran its first flight out of Luton airport, an unlovely huddle of buildings to the northwest of London, in 1995; Ryanair, started by a Tipperary businessman named Tony Ryan and members of his family, began shyly, in 1985, ferrying passengers from Waterford, Ireland, to London Gatwick. The aircraft were fifteen-seaters, so cramped that the cabin crew had to be shorter than five feet two. (When I read this on the Ryanair Web site, I assumed it was a joke. Not so, although the temptation to rename the company Oz, or Hi-Ho, must have been overwhelming.) Those days are long vanished; full deregulation of the airlines between Britain and the rest of Europe arrived in 1997, and Ryanair has swelled into a ravening beast. Last year it carried thirty-five million passengers. At the outset, Ryanair and easyJet faced derision and even—from the established carriers—outright hostility, but it soon became clear that this aggression was fuelled by fear. EasyJet, especially, seemed an unmissable target, with its billboards, crew uniforms, and fuselages decked out in a retina-scarring shade of orange; but B.A. stopped laughing when the newcomer ran a flight from London to Glasgow for twenty-nine pounds. It was not only cheaper than flying with B.A.; it was, unless you were a monk with a place to stay, cheaper than remaining in London for the weekend.



More than a decade later, that is still the case, but the opportunities to extend the principle have multiplied and swarmed. You can fly to Scotland for less than the price of a tin of shortbread, but why pass from one shower of flesh-puckering rain to another when, for not much more, you can be bronzing in Nice by lunchtime? The paradox is both delectable and damning: the best thing to happen to Great Britain in the past decade is the increasing profusion of ways to get the hell out of the place. Visit the

Ryanair Web site and there, sprawled before your avaricious eyes, is a map of Europe forested with dots. (I like to spend an idle hour surfing the site, planning languid weekends in little-known spots; the technical term for this is "pornography.") Click on a town, and from it will spring a tracery of flight lines. Ryanair makes use of a hundred and fifteen airports, ranging from Aarhus to Zaragoza, taking in a nest of spidery anagrams: Bydgoszcz, Szczecin, and the mild but ominous Kaunas. Some of the landing spots are old favorites, like Venice and Pisa. Others are revived watering holes; the money you save flying to Baden-Baden, for example, can be spent, and lost, within seconds of hitting the local casino. The Ryanair flight to Leipzig is presumably infested with music junkies, avid for their dose of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, just as the easyJet run to and from Tallinn, the spiritual home of cheap booze, is said to resound with the rousing refrains of Brits on their way to a stag weekend, and, far worse, with the moans of nauseated Brits on their way home.

The British travel journalist Simon Calder has written a funny and exhaustive study of this brave new world, titled "No Frills: The Truth Behind the Low-Cost Revolution in the Skies." One of the truths was delivered to Calder by Stelios Haji-Iannou, the chunky and cheerful Greek Cypriot who founded easyJet, and who has extended the franchise to cover car rental, hotels, and Internet cafés. As he says, "The Internet has probably had a bigger effect on people's ability to fly than the jet engine." If this is so, it is largely because of the intense relief that we all experience from no longer having to deal with travel agents. Reserving my flight to Vitoria-Gasteiz took less than three minutes. I went to the Ryanair Web site, scrolled down to my destination, checked the price for that day, confirmed my address and payment details (which had been held since a previous booking), waited forty-five seconds for a reference number, and logged off. At no point did I hold a physical ticket in my hand; seats are unallocated, so there is a stimulating last-minute scramble to the plane from the gate, with the elderly getting a head start, parents with babies half a length behind, and the rest of us tensed on our marks at the rear of the field. (Or, for suavity's sake, joining the line at the last minute. What's the damn rush?)

Many budget fliers will tell you, with a rasp of irritation, that some trips are more budget than others. If I were to book a couple of days in Trieste beginning on the middle Sunday of May (a blissful time to go), it would cost me just under ten pounds ($17.50) to go and seventy-nine pence ($1.40) to return. If I suddenly wished to go there next week, it would cost sixty pounds ($108) to go and a head-spinning hundred and fifty pounds ($262) to come back—the neatest option, of course, being never to come back at all. Such suddenness, in any case, would probably be a business demand; private stragglers like me tend to plan their driftings ahead of time—and, if one can't make it on the day, then the loss of a few pence will hardly be wounding. The most notorious hitch in that argument is the dreaded matter of additional costs: government taxes, fuel taxes, airport taxes, and other demonic extras. (With these tacked on, the May jaunt would total £36.52, or around sixty-four dollars: not nothing, but still cheaper than dinner and a movie.) There is no getting around those taxes, or so I thought, until Calder, in "No Frills," cunningly spotted a loophole: "You can fly completely free of charge, but there are two catches: the flights are strictly one-way, from Stansted airport to Knock, in the west of Ireland. And you have to be dead."

The fact is that many travellers, who like to take off when alive (and, preferably, to arrive in the same condition), narrow their eyes at the promises made by the cheap airlines. The leading complaints are as follows:

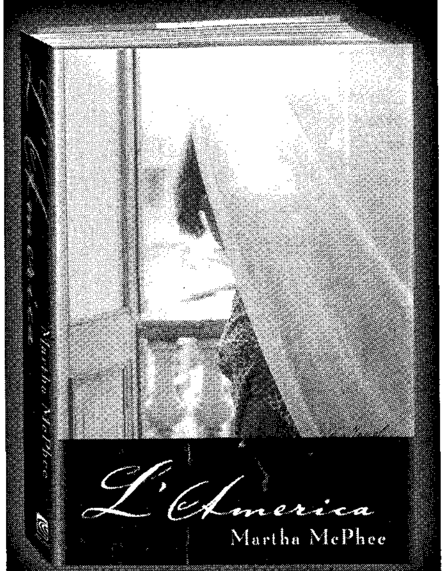
1. "If you pay a dollar to sit on an airplane, that airplane must by definition be glued together with spit and powered, at best, by a thousand hamsters jogging in their wheels."

This is not true. In fact, Ryanair runs a fleet of a hundred and three 737s of the most recent vintage.

2. "You have to pay extra for baggage."

Correct, and a good thing, too. Since March 16th, any suitcase that goes into the hold sets you back two and a half pounds for every twenty kilos in weight. The kind of person who cannot leave the house without bringing half of it along for

"Breathtakingly sensual."*



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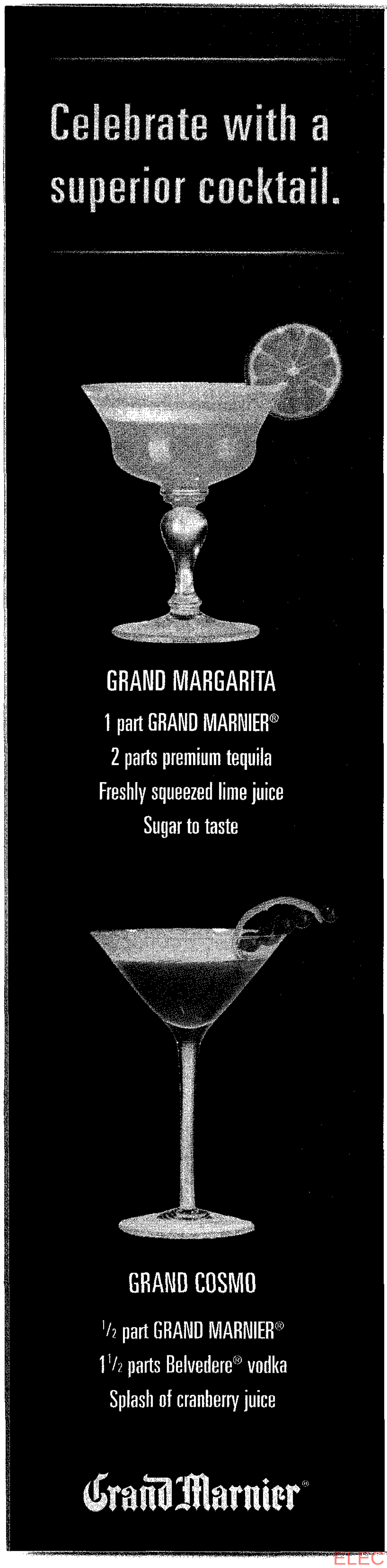
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Splash of cranberry juice

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the ride has missed the point of budget airlines, and should ideally be forbidden to board. Cheap travel equals hand luggage: it helps us to shrug off the dead weight of everyday stuff, and to trim our possessions to match the fares. My packing for Vitoria-Gasteiz consisted of: socks, pair of, one; underwear, change of, one; shirt, clean, one; toothbrush and toothpaste; book, gloomy, one; woollen scarf, one, in case my destination lay within the Arctic Circle; sunglasses, pair of, one, in case it turned out to be a Maltese spa.

3. "Some of the airports have only a distant relation to the towns whose names they bear."

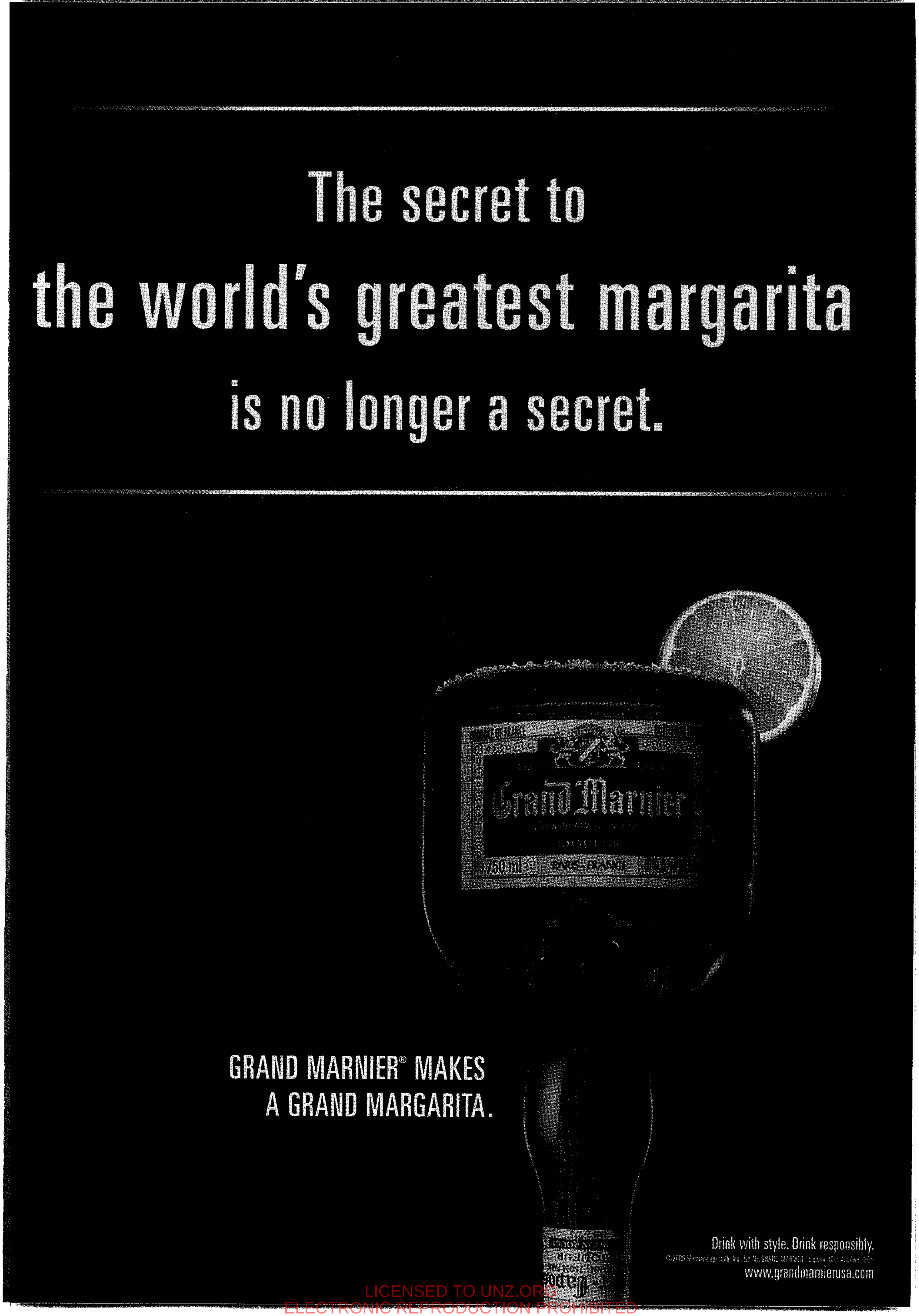
Partly true. People flying Ryanair to Frankfurt, for instance, may be taken aback to realize that they have landed sixty miles away. Sixty miles is about as close to Frankfurt as I wish to get, but employees of Deutsche Bank might still prefer Lufthansa, bearing in mind that it was once the butt of Ryanair's "Stuff it to Lufty" campaign. The majority of budget destinations (some of them restored to civilian life after decades of military usage during the Cold War) are more pleasantly placed. Rome Ciampino, for instance, the poor relation of the city's principal airport, is wholly preferable, not least because the road trip into town takes you along the Appian Way, whose rickety stones shook the bones of Julius Caesar. Facilities may be limited at these smaller outposts, but what exactly do you crave from airport shops that you could not purchase, under a fraction of the stress, at your local mall? Could anybody enlighten me, for instance, as to the logical connection between commercial aviation and Teddy bears? Airports are not pleasure palaces. They are strip-lit dungeons, and, far from being encouraged to linger within them, we should whisk through them as speedily as possible. Arrive at Paris Charles de Gaulle on American Airlines, say, and you will be sucked into a tubular horror of hubs and spokes in which no one but Jacques Tati—or, in a pinch, Fernand Léger—could take pleasure. Arrive at Bergerac on Ryanair, as I did in 2004, and the architectural template is closer to that of a garden shed. I picked up a rental car from the office next door, which really *was* a shed, and found myself zipping toward the town, four miles away, with the scent of truffles already in my nostrils.

4. "The less you pay, the earlier the flight."

No longer true. It used to be accepted that the more aching your need for that fortnight of relaxation, the more harshly you would be forced to rise an hour before dawn and stand in line with your swaying, befuddled children, who would gradually shock themselves awake with chunks of duty-free chocolate. EasyJet still offers the breakfast slot on many routes, but it is seldom your only choice. On Ryanair, my Vitoria-Gasteiz adventure began just after noon, and the return was scheduled for three-fifty the following afternoon. At lunchtime in Carcassonne this January, I furred my arteries with a local cassoulet, called a cab at half past two, and still made the three-forty with embarrassing ease. Check-in took twenty-five seconds. If I'd known, I would have stayed for a crème brûlée.

5. "If Ryanair charges ten cents for a seat, it must be cutting corners to make a profit."

The fact is that the airline would prefer to fill that seat rather than leave it empty, on the understanding that, once in place, you are a captive consumer. The salesmanship on short flights is direct and unabashed, trusting that we will be overcome by the need to wear Glow, the new fragrance from J. Lo, or by a raging desire to buy a watch. (If so, the airline would command a juicy cut of your purchase price.) There is also the fact that local councils and businesses on the Continent have an even deeper desire to open their airports to Ryanair; because of the business that tourists and entrepreneurs will bring, the airline is offered incentives—in effect, subsidies—to land at a particular airport. Board a flight to Balaton, a new Ryanair destination in Hungary, and you will reportedly find it crammed with property developers scouting for grand estates or other bargains, which they will then refurbish and sell at a celestial profit in a few years' time. Something similar has long since occurred in southern France, where you can scarcely pop a cork without hitting a British family who have bought a second home within an hour of Carcassonne, to which they smirkingly commute on the weekend. According to a report in the *Financial Times* at the end of last year, more than three thousand jobs have been created in the area around Carcassonne



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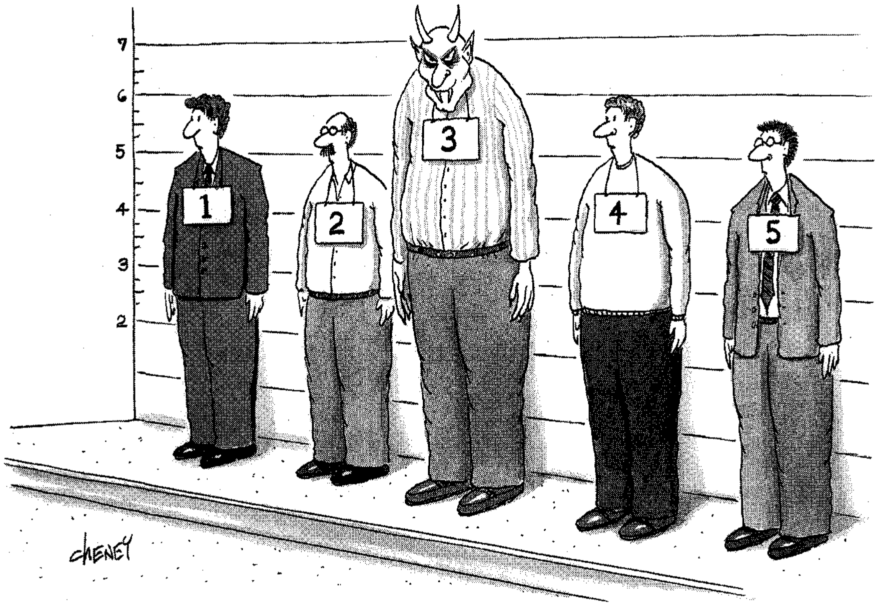

*"Thank you, gentlemen—you may all leave except for No. 3."*

since Ryanair began flying there in 1998. The additional economic activity brought to the region is estimated at three hundred and seventy-four million euros.

6. "Every time you fly, the aircraft's emissions hasten the end of the planet."

Guilty as charged. All planes are a threat in this respect, but, since takeoff and landing burn more fuel than level flight, those on the short hops are the leading offenders. If you can't stomach the irresponsibility, don't fly. There are moves afoot to make airlines sign on to the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme, which could in one swoop clean up the skies and foul up your holiday plans. In other words, we could be living through a brief gilded age of European flight, which is doomed, like Icarus, to rise too close to the sun. Go while you can, before the plunge.

There is another, more thoughtful response to the charge of planetary indifference: sell your car and walk. Such is the advice of Michael O'Leary, the chief executive of Ryanair, whose personal fortune is thought to nudge two hundred and eighty million pounds. To find him, I went to Dublin, his center of operations, trudging down a charmless thoroughfare at the side of the airport and winding up in a small lobby. A chipper, salty-haired fellow in jeans and sneakers came to guide me upstairs to see the chief executive; halfway up, I realized that he *was* the chief executive. The airline revolutionary, it turns out, doesn't like planes. "I am not a cloud bunny," he has said. "I am not an aerosexual."

Although he is well educated (at Clongowes, a leading Irish private school, and Trinity College, Dublin), O'Leary assumes the role of the roughened man of the people, and the defense that he mounts of his trade is like the bray of a trumpet. You sense that any badly run monopoly would have attracted his combative interest; in the event, flying was the most badly run of all. "Air travel was one of the few restricted markets back in the mid-eighties. The only reason it was restricted was because it had been fucked up by governments and civil servants since about 1945," he says. Although O'Leary didn't issue any of the more overt threats that have peppered his public pronouncements (travel agents, it seems, should be "taken out and shot"), he was still winningly bullish on such bugbears as the British Airports Authority, which is responsible for taxing his flights in and out of Britain ("They fucking piss away as much money on capital expenditure as is humanly possible"), and which, since we spoke, has had to repel a hostile takeover bid—long overdue, in O'Leary's view—from a consortium led by Spain's Ferrovial Group. His purest scorn is reserved for what he perceives as the snobbery of environmentalists: "Their solution is, stop ordinary people or poor people from flying. Let's have flying back with just the rich people, and then all will be well again. Yeh know, bollocks." He has no time for social typecasting—"There's really very little prejudice that can't be overcome by an eighteen-pound ticket"—and his riff on the formality of flying as an absurd leftover of cruise-ship days struck me as unarguable. "What's with all the gold braid and the toy-soldier stuff?" he asked me, not waiting for an answer. "What's all this horseshit of carrousels?" And the function of an airplane? "It's a bus."

At a recent lunch, I met somebody who swore to the truth of a story from the nineteen-eighties. He was sitting in an Aeroflot plane at an Italian airport. In fact, he had been sitting there for four hours, on a warm day, with nothing to eat or drink. The plane, like many of its brothers and sisters in the Aeroflot fleet, was not in good shape, and any prospect of an imminent takeoff had long since receded. Finally, the man lost patience. He attracted the attention of the cabin staff and asked for a drink of water. Their reaction could not have been swifter. A sturdy Russian female flight attendant strode down the aisle and slapped him in the face.

As in-flight service goes, this seems to me, if true, beyond criticism. It offers just the personal, attentive, one-on-one approach that the art of customer relations strives to achieve. The memory of that day had clearly lodged in the man's mind, and how often, as a frequent flier, can one honestly claim as much? Make no mistake: flying is a drag. For some people, it is a cauldron of horrors, seething with imagined catastrophe; for the nerveless few, it is a joy, although no joy that ends up at Logan could ever be described as unqualified. For the majority of us, though, the effect of a flight is tenfold. It tires; it cramps; it dehydrates; it plays mysterious havoc with the digestion; it both clamors for alcohol and, by a nice irony, renders you twice as susceptible to its aftermath; it inflicts a combination of tedium and trepidation that most of us have not experienced since we last sat in a hospital waiting room; it places you in close, unbroken proximity to two or more strangers whose company, at ground level, you might take strenuous pains to avoid; it offers, given the location

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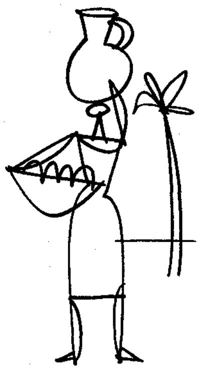
of most airports, a more extensive tour of the rusty outlying districts of major conurbations than you would perhaps have chosen; it introduces you, often brusquely, to the meaning of the phrase "air pocket"; but—and this is the only but that matters—it gets you there.

From this flows the logic of the no-frills airline. What Ryanair, easyJet, and other low-cost operators have made bitingly clear is that the frills delivered by other airlines are not frills at all, and never were. A frill should be a lovely thing. It should embroider and complete the already sumptuous, not hide a fraying edge or a dull patch. Such, however, is the task of the airborne frill. It is a panacea—a diversionary tactic to make you forget that, in terms of the honor accorded to your body and soul, you might as well be trapped inside a family-size can of anchovies. I have been a patron of British Airways for many years, and they have always pitied me enough to treat me with courtesy, but, as the flight attendant lays forth the breakfast tray, I sense an unspoken pact between provider and consumer, which neither party seems remotely willing to break.

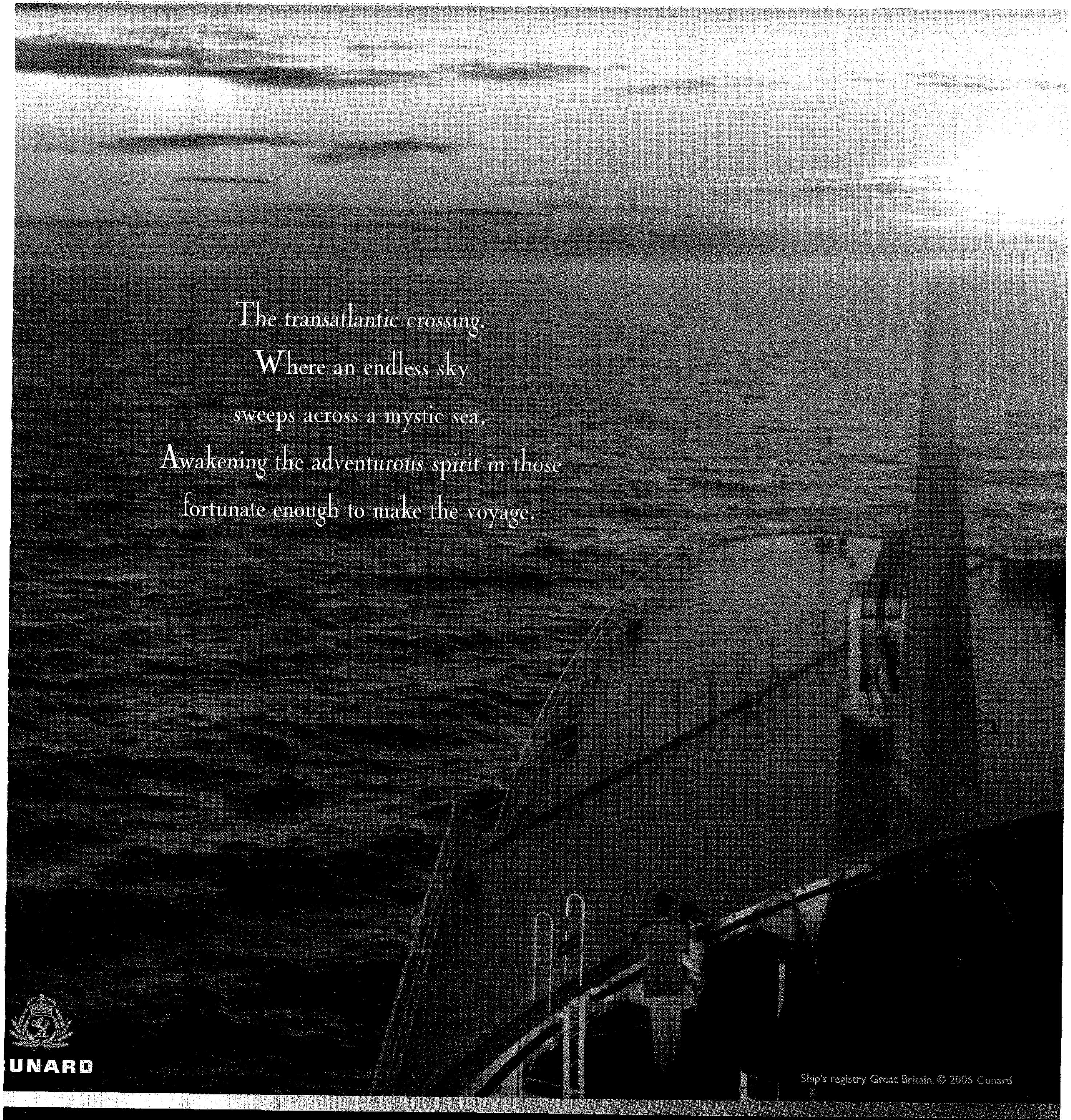
The pact goes as follows: I will give you hundreds, or thousands, of dollars, and in return you will give me a small, tepid disk of animal muscle, the color of a water vole, at ten o'clock in the morning. I cannot begin to calibrate the extent to which I do not desire this, but I will accept it anyway, because I have nothing better to do and nowhere else to go. You and I are both aware that steak is uniquely unsuited to this occasion, being one of those foodstuffs that must be consumed either straight from the grill or not at all. Some chefs advocate that the meat should be left to rest for three minutes before serving; none would suggest that it be cooked hours or perhaps days in advance and then reheated at thirty thousand feet, an altitude at which the human taste bud appears to lose all powers of discernment. Nevertheless, with a few savage strokes of my plastic knife, I will cut into the disk, scrutinize its murky interior, and then hand it back. And thus will end another entrancing dumb show, in which you have flattered me with the gift of steak and I have welcomed it, on the insane principle that steak is a classy dish, and that it therefore befits the palates of those who are engaged in the equally classy business known as air travel. "Did you enjoy your meal, sir?"



With budget airlines, this deceit is dropped. Their sole purpose is to jet you from A to B, and, since the living should be easier in B, who cares about luxury along the way? Ryanair has no free food or drink on board, and, should you feel hungry, it will charge you the amusing price of two euros ($2.40) for a small tub of potato chips. Bottled water runs to five euros per litre. As a wellspring of revenue, this is a clever move, in an environment where everybody will succumb to thirst. Before one Ryanair excursion, I actually made and packed my own sandwiches, like a little old lady on a slow, provincial French train. This forward planning was roundly jeered by my fellow-passengers as the action of a tightwad, yet there was no mistaking the smack of licked lips around me as I unwrapped my treasure; this turned to rabid frothing when we arrived, at ten past two, in a small, well-preserved Italian town—so well preserved that it stopped serving lunch at two o'clock. Fortified by my ham and lettuce on whole wheat, I felt like the last living human in a zombie flick.

Three things were notable about that trip. The seat cost me a dollar each way, plus taxes and airport charges. The tagliatelle ai funghi that I ate for dinner that night was better, and more seductively yolk-yellow, than anything I could have ordered in Britain. And the plane landed ahead of schedule on both legs of the journey. Given these virtues, the question has to be: why travel any other way? And, given the centuries of ethnic attrition, religious abrasion, and bloodily contested borders that make up the history of the Continent, do Europeans realize how blessed they are in the hops and skips that now allow them, for the cost of a T-shirt, to escape without censure from one country to the next? To have moved from the bleakness of sixty years ago, when millions of the dispossessed formed the floating detritus of the Second World War, to a time in which, as Michael O'Leary told me, planeloads of Danes and Norwegians merrily fly to England just for a soccer match may sound like a trivial change, but of such trivia is our freedom composed. In the words of Sir Bob Geldof, Michael O'Leary's delicate compatriot: "If I can get a seven-quid flight to somewhere within two hundred miles of Venice, well I'll fucking take it. Seven quid, I don't care *where* I fucking go."

In that spirit, I have a suggestion for the President of the United States. When he and the First Lady next need a vacation, they should hitch a ride to J.F.K. There they can catch a flight with Eos or MAXjet, both of which are new operations that fly exclusively from the United States to Stansted. (The first offers only first-class seats, the second only business class, each at a sliver of what the same deal would cost on American Airlines or B.A.) Arriving in Stansted at breakfast time, the Bushes can grab their rucksacks and sprint for the easyJet seven-fifteen to Bilbao, hoping that it has been delayed. (If they miss it, there's one in the afternoon.) Once there, they will doubtless want to gawp at the Guggenheim, before checking in at the Gran Hotel Domine Bilbao Silken, where the restaurant is called Beltz the Black, and—definitely worth staying up for, if they can tough out the jet lag—the d.j. bar is called Splash & Crash. The next day, the Bushes could switch to Air Berlin, another operator that is currently opening routes in Middle Europe, like an explorer hacking out a jungle path; prices start at less than two dollars. That will take them straight to Salzburg, where, by way of an antidote to all the Spanish clubbing, the contented couple can join the Julie Andrews trail and stock up on marzipan. Another leg, to Stansted with Ryanair, a fast transfer to MAXjet, which runs a flight to Dulles, and they can sneak back to the White House before anybody realizes that they've been away. I'm not sure of their budget, but, if they skip the hip accommodation in favor of hostels, they could limit themselves to the legendary "Europe on $25 a day" advocated in the past by Arthur Frommer, although even Mr. Frommer would not have dreamed of including flights within that sum. I can guarantee that Mr. and Mrs. Bush will feel reborn, and, if they get lost in Spain, so what? I did. ♦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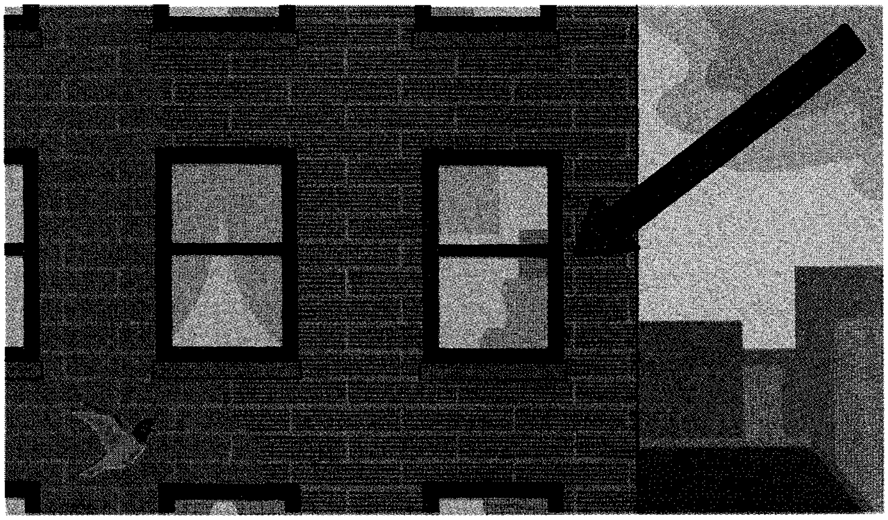
### SHOUTS & MURMURS

# THE LONELY PLANET GUIDE TO MY APARTMENT

### BY JONATHAN STERN

ORIENTATION

My Apartment's vast expanse of unfurnished space can be daunting at first, and its population of one difficult to communicate with. After going through customs, you'll see a large area with a couch to the left. Much of My Apartment's "television viewing" occurs here, as does the very occasional **making out with a girl** (see "Festivals"). To the north is the **food district**, with its colorful cereal boxes and **antojitos**, or "little whims."



WHAT TO BRING

A good rule of thumb is "If it's something you'll want, you have to bring it in yourself." This applies to water, as well as to toilet paper and English-language periodicals. Most important, come with plenty of cash, as there's sure to be someone with his hand out. In My Apartment, it's axiomatic that you have to grease the wheels to make the engine run.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to travel to My Apartment is typically after most people in their twenties are already showered and dressed and at a job. Visits on Saturdays and Sundays before 2 P.M. are highly discouraged, and can result in lengthy delays at the border (see "Getting There and Away").

LOCAL CUSTOMS

The population of My Apartment has a daily ritual of **bitching**, which occurs at the end of the workday and prior to ordering in food. Usually, meals are taken during reruns of "Stargate Atlantis." Don't be put off by impulsive sobbing or unprovoked rages. These traits have been passed down through generations and are part of the colorful heritage of My Apartment's people. The annual **Birthday Meltdown** (see "Festivals") is a tour de force of recrimination and self-loathing, highlighted by fanciful stilt-walkers and dancers wearing hand-sewn headdresses.

HEALTH

Rabies and hepatitis have almost completely been eradicated from My Apartment, owing to an intensive program of medication and education. However, travellers must still be wary of **sexually transmitted diseases**. While abstinence is the only certain preventative, it is strenuously not endorsed by the My Apartment government. Condoms and antibiotics are available on most evenings (see "Medical Services").

SOCIETY & CULTURE

The inhabitants of My Apartment tend to be insecure and combative. This is likely the result of living under the thumb of a series of **illegitimate dictators** (see "History") that have dominated the citizens in recent years. Since the Breakup of 2004 and the ensuing electoral reforms, the situation has become more democratic.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Solo female travellers are often subjected to excessive unwanted male attention. Normally, these men only want to talk to you, but their entreaties can quickly become tiresome. Don't be afraid to be rude. Even a mild polite response can be perceived as an expression of interest. The best approach is to avoid eye contact, always wear a bra, and talk incessantly about your "fiancé, Neil."

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The ongoing economic recession has led to a large increase in **petty crime**. For the most part, this is limited to the "borrowing" of personal items and the occasional accidental disappearance of the neighbor's newspaper. However, the U.S. Department of State has issued a warning about several common cons—such as the "I'm out of small bills" scam, typically perpetrated when the delivery guy arrives.

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

Various international agencies can place volunteers in projects working on areas such as job training, doing my laundry, election monitoring, developing opportunities for young women, running to the deli for me, and therapeutic massage.

THINGS TO SEE & DO

A ten-foot walk to the non-working fireplace brings musically inclined visitors to the popular **collection of novelty records**, which includes "Leonard Nimoy Sings." The north-facing section of My Apartment is divided into two districts. In the lively Bedroom District, the excellent **drawer of snapshots of ex-girlfriends naked** is a good way to gain a deeper understanding of the history of the people, and is open for guided tours on most Saturdays between 2 A.M. and 3 A.M.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

The Western Quarter is home to the **bathtub with one working spa jet,** in which the recreation commissioner of My Apartment plans to hold an **international jello-wrestling tournament** in the spring of 2007.

### PLACES TO EAT

Tourists often flock to the **salvaged wooden telephone-cable spool** in front of the TV as a convenient dining spot. More adventurous eaters might try **standing over the sink,** as the locals do. If you're willing to venture off the beaten track, there's **balancing your plate on the arm of the couch** or **using the toilet lid as a makeshift table.**

### NIGHT LIFE

The music on offer tends toward late-seventies disco recordings, but they are sometimes embellished with impromptu live vocal performances. There was once a cockfight in My Apartment, though it was unplanned and will likely never happen again (see "Law Enforcement").

### SPORTS & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The **air-hockey table** probably still works.

### EXCURSIONS

A short trip in almost any direction will bring travellers to one of many unique **Starbucks** outlets. Or try one of the nightly walking tours to the sidewalk in front of the brownstone across the street to watch **that redhead** getting out of the shower with her curtains open. And tourists are often sent around the corner to visit the **A.T.M. machine** in order to stock up for the rigorous financial demands of a trip to My Apartment.

### MULE RENTAL

Mules can be rented by the hour or the day and are situated near the **main closet.** Prices vary with the season and it's best to reserve in advance, since My Apartment's stable of twenty-six mules books up fast. They may not be the quickest form of transportation, but they provide a wonderful way to see My Apartment up close.

### WILDLIFE

The dog's name is **Sadie.** Don't touch her. ♦

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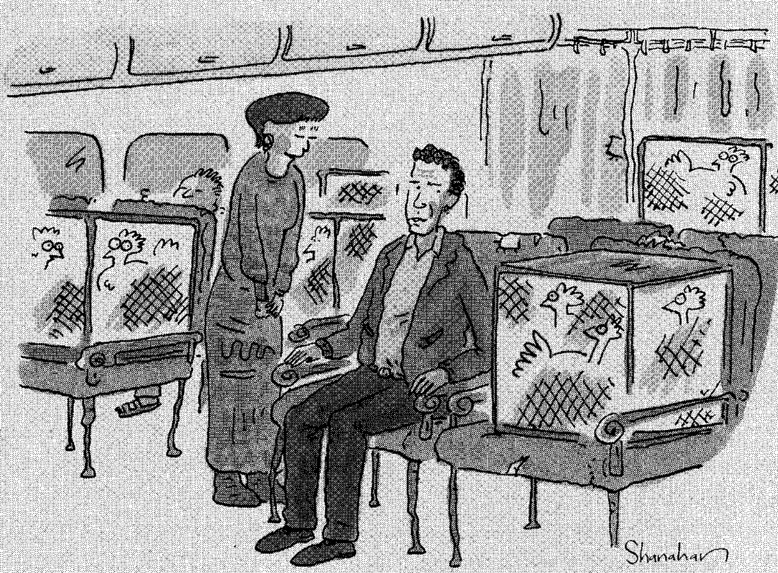

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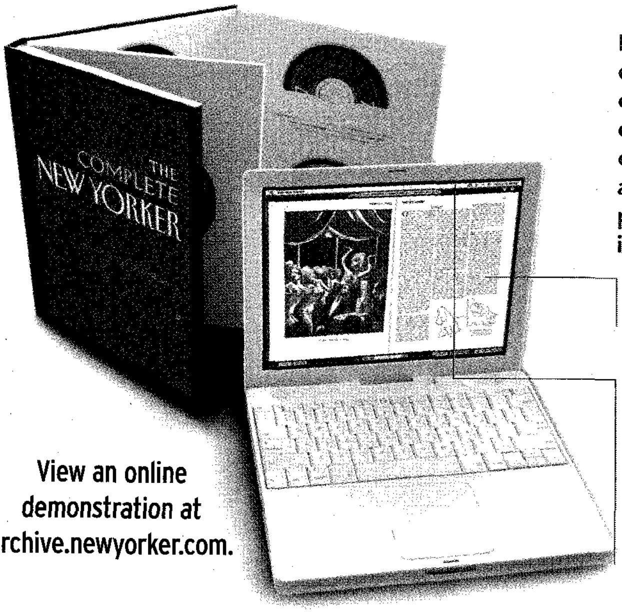

### A REPORTER AT LARGE

# THE SNAKEHEAD

*The criminal odyssey of Chinatown's Sister Ping.*

BY PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE

Several hours before dawn on June 6, 1993, two Park Service police officers were patrolling the road next to Jacob Riis Park, a long stretch of beach on the Rockaway peninsula, in Queens, when they were startled by two Asian men flagging them down. As the officers got out of their car, they heard the sound of screams coming from the beach. The moon was full, and about a hundred yards offshore the officers saw a hundred-and-fifty-foot tramp steamer that had run aground. The ship's deck was crowded with people, and, as the officers watched, men and women jumped over the side, falling twenty feet into the surging waves below. Dozens of figures bobbed in the water, some managing to clamber ashore, others flailing wildly, apparently unable to swim. The officers radioed for backup.

*The Golden Venture shipwreck (right) complicated the activities of Sister Ping (above) but did not end them.*

LEFT: DAILY NEWS; RIGHT: PAUL J. DeMARIA

The ship's name, stencilled in white block letters on the bow, was the Golden Venture. Its cargo was nearly three hundred illegal Chinese emigrants. Before reaching the Rockaways, the ship had sailed some seventeen thousand miles, from Thailand to Kenya, around the Cape of Good Hope, then across the Atlantic to New York.

The passengers—mostly adults, but a few children—were emaciated. They had been confined in the ship's hold for months, subsisting on rice, peanuts, and purified salt water. It had been uncomfortably hot, and many passengers wore only underwear; when they hit the water, which was fifty-three degrees, some went into cardiac arrest. One Coast Guard officer who performed CPR on two men onshore recalled, "I could feel the gristle of their bodies, the cartilage. They walked up out of the water, collapsed on the beach, and died."

Six bodies were recovered from the surf; four others were found later. By dawn, news helicopters were capturing live footage of the disaster. The Golden Venture accident was not an isolated incident: in the preceding year, more than a dozen ships had dropped human cargo from China on American shores. In April, a ship called the Mermaid 1, carrying two hundred and thirty-seven illegal Chinese, had been intercepted by the Coast Guard near the Bahamas. In May, the Pai Sheng had slipped beneath the Golden Gate Bridge at night, depositing two hundred and fifty passengers on a San Francisco pier. An internal Department of Justice report declared an "immigration emergency"; the San Francisco *Chronicle* heralded a "SMUGGLER SHIP INVASION."

Several miles from the beach, in a small shop at 47 East Broadway, in Manhattan's Chinatown, a middle-aged woman named Cheng Chui Ping watched the story unfold on television. Short and stout, with cropped black hair, wide-set dark eyes, and a hangdog expression, she was known in the neighborhood as Ping Jia—Sister Ping. Her gruff demeanor and simple clothes gave her the appearance of a Chinese peasant; she had little formal education, spoke almost no English, and spent most of her waking hours managing the shop, which sold clothes and goods from China, and a restaurant in the basement. But Sister Ping was also an extraordinarily wealthy businesswoman who owned the restaurant and the shop, as well as the building that housed them. She was what the Chinese call a *shetou*, or "snakehead"—an underworld entrepreneur who charges tens of thousands of dollars to shepherd undocumented migrants from one country to another. She helped purchase the Golden Venture, and two of its passengers owed her fees. One of them had died.

Last summer, twelve years after the Golden Venture ran aground, Sister

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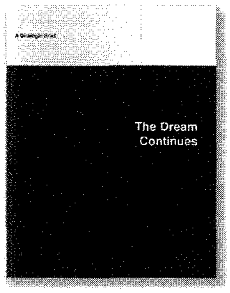

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Ping—now fifty-six, and a grandmother—was tried in a federal courtroom in New York City. She became the twenty-third person to be convicted in connection with the voyage. Described by the authorities as "the mother of all snakeheads," she was charged with operating what prosecutors called "a conglomerate built upon misery and greed." Moving people illegally from one country to another requires an extensive network of international contacts and an ability to outwit immigration and law-enforcement officers. With a well-connected family, acute entrepreneurial instincts, and a callous, life-is-cheap attitude toward the poor migrants who were her customers, Sister Ping was well suited to the job. Working with associates in China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Belize, Kenya, South Africa, Guatemala, Mexico, and Canada, she helped create the China-to-Chinatown route in the early nineteen-eighties and ushered thousands of undocumented Chinese emigrants to America. According to the F.B.I., over the course of two decades she made some forty million dollars.

Not long ago, I visited a man named Michael Chen, who arrived in America on the Golden Venture and had agreed to talk with me about the journey. Chen is now thirty-two. He is short and slight, with a boyish face and thick, expressive eyebrows. We met in the spotless Chinese restaurant that he owns in a strip mall in suburban Columbus, Ohio; in the lull between lunch and dinner, he related his ordeal.

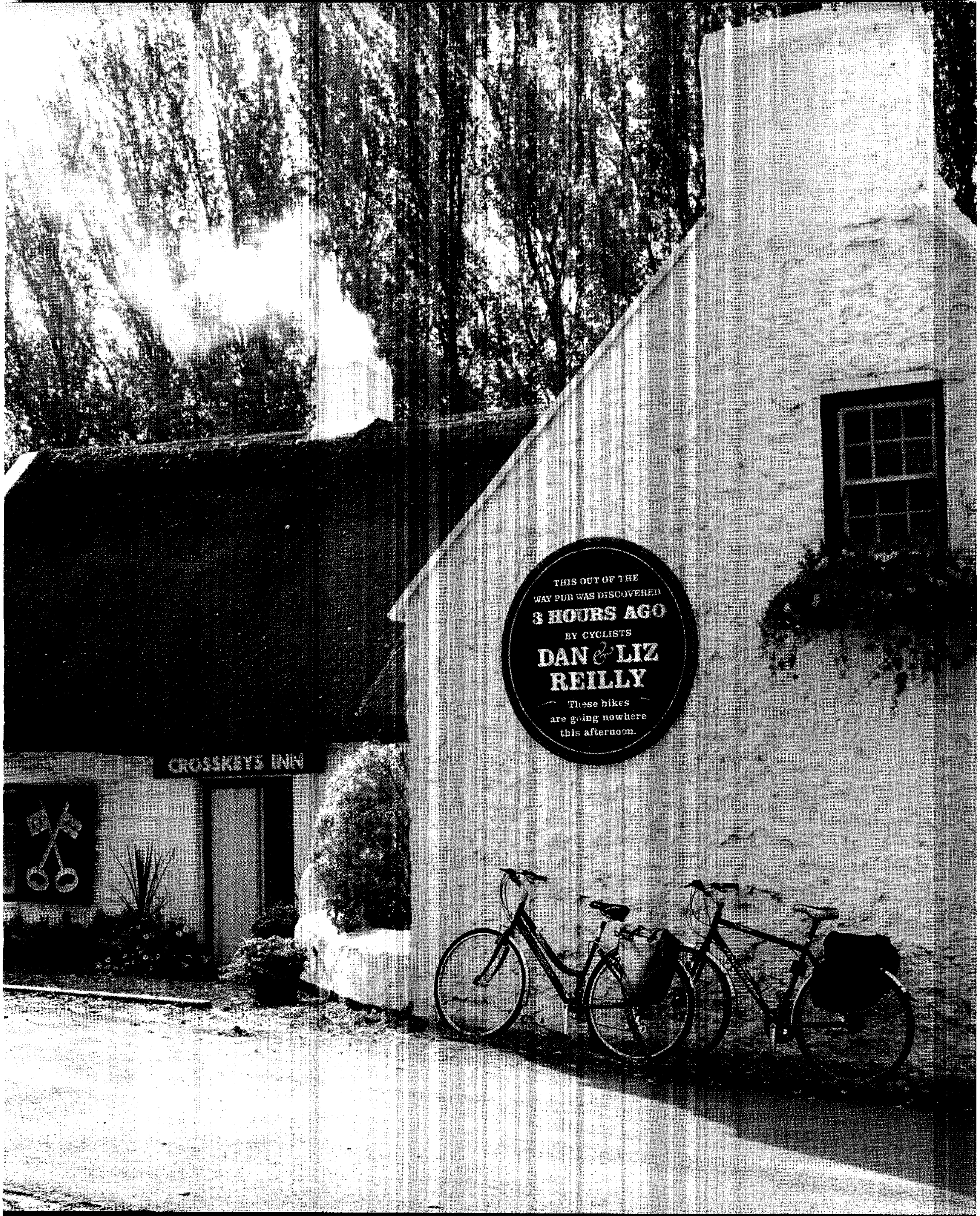
The first Chinese who came to America, in the mid-nineteenth century, originated from a few counties on the Pearl River delta, around the southern city of Guangzhou. Michael Chen was part of another great wave of emigrants, who came from a series of villages along the Min River in Fujian Province, a mountainous sliver of coast across the straits from Taiwan.

Chen grew up outside Fuzhou, the regional capital. His father was a produce farmer who fished at night to supplement his income. Several of his uncles had gained entry to New York in the nineteen-eighties by paying snakeheads. These smugglers had emerged during the nineteen-sixties and seventies, when many mainland Chinese were fleeing to Hong Kong, which was then still in British hands. At Sister Ping's trial, one Fujianese snakehead explained that when smuggled emigrants slither through the wire fences strung along borders "the shape of it looks like a snake."

The Fujianese (sometimes called Fukienese) had various reasons for leaving home—what demographers call "push factors"—ranging from political repression to China's policies of sterilization and forced abortion. But interviews with numerous Fujianese who entered the United States illegally indicate that many were prompted by the "pull factor" of America's capitalist system. "In their life here, they're working like slaves, but there is hope for them to change everything," said Justin Yu, a veteran reporter for the *World Journal*, a Chinese-language daily. "But over there, for a fisherman? For a farmer with a little piece of land? They'll never change their life."

As a teen-ager, Michael Chen was admitted to a school for talented children, but a local Party official stole Chen's identity in order to enroll his son. Provincial Party bosses govern more or less unchecked in Fujian, and soon afterward, in 1991, when Chen was sixteen, his parents borrowed enough money to make a five-thousand-dollar down payment to a local "little snakehead"—a recruiter who drums up business for "big snakeheads." The total fee was thirty thousand dollars, with the balance due upon Chen's safe arrival in America. Chinese snakeheads had Bangkok immigration officials on the payroll, and furnished their clients with "photo-sub" passports, which required only the substitution of the passenger's picture. "They told us, 'Easy: you just go on the bus, or motorcycle, to Thailand,' " Chen told me with a bitter smile. " 'In Thailand, maybe one week or two weeks, they will arrange you by plane to the U.S.A.' "

During the nineteen-eighties and nineties, the demography of New York's Chinatown was changing significantly. The 1960 census showed twenty thousand Chinese living in the city; by the mid-eighties, the population had swelled to more than two hundred thousand. The arriving Fujianese settled on Chinatown's grubby eastern frontier—along East Broadway, under the Manhattan Bridge, and on Eldridge and Division Streets—and established restaurants and small businesses. As soon as a new arrival paid off his snakehead debt (which often took years), he began saving money to bring over another family member. In this manner, whole clans made the journey, and, eventually, entire villages. Men of working age abandoned once-bustling rural Chinese communities. Emigrants who prospered sent money back for the construction of multistory houses, which rose incongruously from the rice pad-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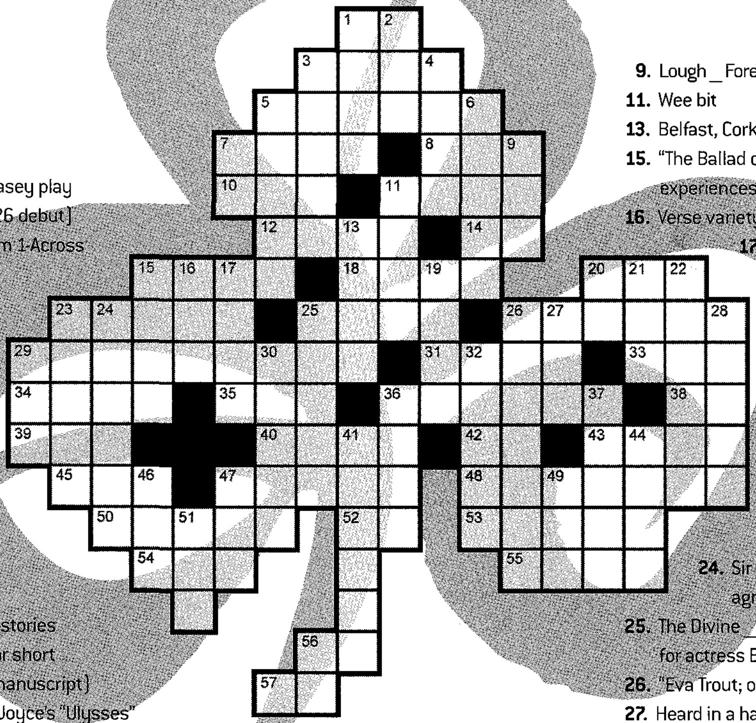
Or go to NewYorkerReaderLink.com, print out the puzzle, and send your completed crossword by May 31, 2006.

See rules for contest details.



**ACROSS**

**1.** Irish poet/playwright, _ _ Yeats
**3.** "I hear it in the deep heart's _." (Final line of 11-Across)
**5.** "The _ and the Stars" (Sean O'Casey play that sparked rioting with its 1926 debut)
**7.** _ Gonne, Irish patriot with whom 1-Across was enamored
**8.** Druids' sacred tree
**10.** Céide Fields, a Stone _ site dating back 5,000 years
**11.** "The Lake _ of Innisfree" (Poem by 1-Across)
**12.** "Irish counties are abbreviated _ _," said the geographer.
**14.** Edna O'Brien's "The Lone_ Girl"
**15.** Valley
**18.** Samuel Beckett novel, "How _ _"
**20.** Emerald, for one
**23.** "The Silver _," one of the Narnia stories
**25.** Irish historian/writer O'Grady, for short
**26.** _ _ Kells (Ireland's illuminated manuscript)
**29.** June 16th, Dublin, from James Joyce's "Ulysses"
**31.** County in the West
**33.** Ireland's president, Mary McAle_
**34.** _ of Caversham, Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" character
**35.** Humphrey Chimpden _wicker, in "Finnegans Wake"
**36.** Shamrock = _ of Ireland
**38.** Acronym of Frank McCourt's best-seller-turned-movie
**39.** Time period
**40.** Handcrafted Irish souvenir
**42.** A moon of the planet in this "Ulysses" bit: "O jumping Jupiter!"
**43.** Helps
**45.** Edna O'Brien short-story collection, "The Love Obj_"
**47.** "The Quare Fellow," a play by Brendan _
**48.** "The Wild _ _ Coole" by 1-Across
**50.** In the wallets of travelers to Ireland
**52.** Patrick, e.g.
**53.** Bram Stoker's "The Jewel of _ Stars"
**54.** Plea for a part in a play, say
**55.** Bird's abode
**56.** George William Russell's pen name
**57.** _ _ Lewis, author of 23-Across

**DOWN**

**1.** Cocus _, used to make Irish flutes
**2.** _ na Bóinne (Site of megalithic passage tombs)
**3.** Hibernian hints here
**4.** Characters' selves
**5.** Ancient monument type in Eire
**6.** Concert _ (Where to hear Irish music)
**7.** Pa's partner in a story
**9.** Lough _ Forest Park (Tourist attraction in Ireland)
**11.** Wee bit
**13.** Belfast, Cork, or Dublin
**15.** "The Ballad of Reading _" (Oscar Wilde's jail experiences poem)
**16.** Verse variety o' five funny lines, briefly
**17.** Gaelic
**19.** "Mirror _ _ House: The Autobiographies of Sean O'Casey"
**20.** Travel to Ireland
**21.** ". . . and _ by cause that he was elder he spoke to him full gently." (Bit of "Ulysses")
**22.** Magical work of 1886 by 1-Across
**23.** County where the Cliffs of Moher are located
**24.** Sir _ Plunkett (Irish statesman/agriculture expert)
**25.** The Divine _, Oscar Wilde's nickname for actress Bernhardt
**26.** "Eva Trout; or, Changing Scenes" _ _, Elizabeth
**27.** Heard in a haunted house
**28.** Ceilidh spread
**29.** "And live alone in the _-loud glade." (Line from 11-Across)
**30.** Hills and _ _
**32.** Q. "Is there _ _ Eliza Doolittle in 'Pygmalion' by G.B. Shaw?" A. "Aye."
**36.** Mailed a postcard
**37.** They're in Eire's quaint quarters, perhaps cobblestoned
**41.** Enchanted attraction in Ireland
**44.** Not is
**46.** Jonathan Swift's "A Tale of a _"
**47.** Peat _
**49.** 2234 Massachusetts _. NW (Ireland's embassy locale in Washington, D.C.)
**51.** "_ Roses for Me" (Sean O'Casey play)
**56.** Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist _ a Young Man"

**NO PURCHASE OR PAYMENT OF ANY KIND IS NECESSARY** TO ENTER OR WIN THIS SWEEPSTAKES. A purchase will not improve chances of winning. **1.** Promotion begins at 12:01 A.M. EST on April 17, 2006 and ends at 11:59 P.M. EST on May 31, 2006, when all entries must be received. Send completed crossword and entry to The New Yorker Merchandising Department, 4 Times Square, 21st Floor, NY, NY 10036. All entries must be postmarked by May 31, 2006 and received by June 5, 2006. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, late, damaged, illegible, incomplete, incorrect, misdirected or postage-due mail/entries. Only one entry per person/per envelope. Mechanically reproduced entries not eligible. Potential Winner will be selected in a random drawing from all correctly completed crossword puzzles on or about May 31, 2006, and will be notified by e-mail, mail, and/or telephone. If potential winner cannot be contacted, does not respond within five (5) days, or the prize or prize notification is returned as undeliverable, such potential winner forfeits all rights to any prize, and an alternate winner may be selected. All decisions of the judges are final and binding in all respects. Prize includes round-trip economy-class airfare for two from an Aer Lingus gateway nearest winner's home in the U.S. (Boston, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles to Shannon or Dublin, Ireland; car rental for seven (7) days; and six nights' accommodation (double occupancy) in a first-class hotel chosen by Sponsor with breakfasts. All other ground transportation, meals, in-room charges (e.g., mini-bar, movies), telephone calls, gratuities, incidentals, and all other expenses are not included. Trip must be completed by 12/31/06. May be subject to certain restrictions and blackout dates. The approximate retail value of the prize is $3,995 USD depending on exact itinerary. Winner and travel companion must be available to travel on the same itinerary, as selected by Sponsor. **2.** Income and other taxes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the winner. **3.** Entrants must be 18 or older and legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia. Employees of Sponsor and their immediate families are not eligible to win. **4.** Subject to all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Void outside the 50 United States and the District of Columbia, and where prohibited. Any violation of these rules may result in disqualification. The Sponsor is not responsible for errors in the administration or fulfillment of this sweepstakes, including without limitation mechanical, human, printing, distribution or production errors, and may modify or cancel this promotion based upon such error at its sole discretion without liability. **5.** The odds of winning depend on the number of correct entries received. Prize is not transferable. No substitutions for prize except by Sponsor in which case a prize of equal or greater value will be substituted. **6.** All entries become the property of Sponsor and will not be acknowledged or returned. By providing your e-mail address, you grant Sponsor the right to send you commercial messages and share your address with others, unless specified otherwise as indicated on the entry form. **7.** Except where prohibited potential winner may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility (including social security number) and winner and guest a liability/publicity release which must be returned within ten (10) days of attempted notification or an alternate winner may be chosen. **8.** For the name of the winner, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Literary Ireland Crossword Puzzle," The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, 21st Floor, NY, NY 10036 after May 31, 2006 but before November 30, 2006. Sponsor is Condé Nast Publications, publisher of The New Yorker magazine with offices at 4 Times Square, New York, NY, 10036.

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dies—monuments to the filial loyalty of "overseas Chinese." In status-conscious small towns, this inspired other villagers to emigrate, and within several years many of the houses emptied out—becoming lavish, tenantless temples to the good life in America.

New York's established Cantonese community saw the Fujianese as strivers and peasants. The Fujianese dialect is incomprehensible to Cantonese and Mandarin speakers, so the fledgling community was doubly isolated—a ghetto within a ghetto. East Broadway became known as "Fuzhou Street," and the Chinatown shorthand for new arrivals was "eighteen-thousand-dollar men," after the snakehead rate in the eighties.

Some of the Cantonese disapproval stemmed from the fact that the influx of Fujianese coincided with a rise in violent crime in the neighborhood. Chinatown had long been home to street gangs, which managed illegal gambling and massage parlors and extorted money from local businesses. But during the eighties a new kind of gang emerged which was conspicuously more violent.

These gangs embraced human smuggling, initially by working as strongmen for sophisticated international syndicates. Illegal migrants typically have a grace period of two or three days after arriving in America, and borrow a large sum of money to pay their snakeheads—thereby indenturing themselves to friends, family, or loan sharks. The gangs began holding delinquent arrivals hostage, occasionally beating, torturing, or raping them when they failed to come up with the money. Soon the gangsters established their own smuggling networks. "It was a better business than drug trafficking," Steven Wong, a Fujianese community leader in Chinatown, told me. "More profit. Less risk. You get caught and plead guilty right away, you only go to jail for six months." He added, "Another thing is, your merchandise can walk."

The snakehead trade was further fuelled by changes in U.S. immigration policy. A 1986 federal law declared that green-card status could be provided for undocumented aliens who demonstrated that they had lived in the country since 1982 or earlier. This policy was surprisingly useful to those who had not yet left China, as neighborhood businesses could forge backdated records to satisfy the residency requirement. After the 1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square, President George H. W. Bush issued one executive order granting amnesty to Chinese students in the United States and another giving "enhanced consideration" to asylum applications from Chinese nationals who resisted the country's family-planning policies. These orders effectively meant that any Chinese adult could be classified as a refugee. According to Peter Kwong, a professor at Hunter College and an authority on American Chinatowns, the largest influx of illegal Chinese in the country's history entered the United States between 1988 and 1993. A United Nations study estimated that by the mid-nineties the snakehead trade from China to the United States was a three-and-a-half-billion-dollar industry.

Among emigrant Chinese in New York, Sister Ping is widely revered both as an immigrant success story and as an extraordinarily capable professional. "The Fujianese thank two people: one is Cheng Chui Ping, and one is George Bush the father," Philip Lam, a Chinatown real-estate agent who emigrated in the nineteen-eighties, told me. Even as she became more powerful within the neighborhood, Sister Ping cultivated a modest image, avoiding any gaudy trappings of success and working hours that were considered long even in Chinatown. Although she had learned little English during her years in America, she encouraged young Chinatown residents to study the language, arguing that it was an important precondition for success. She developed a tendency to refer to herself in the third person.

This was perhaps understandable: Chinatown residents describe the name "Sister Ping" as an international brand. It is taken for granted that people-smuggling is a perilous business, and that some level of failure is inevitable even for the best brokers—so much so that the disaster which befell the Golden Venture did not particularly diminish Sister Ping's reputation. In fact, she handled accidents in a way that drew *more* customers: when passengers were

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caught by immigration officials, she would forgive the balance of her fee; when passengers died, she paid for their burial. Sister Ping's name became so highly esteemed that other snakeheads fraudulently claimed to be affiliated with her in order to attract business.

Cheng Chui Ping was born in 1949, in the Fujianese farming village of Shengmei; according to the authorities, her father was rumored to be a prominent snakehead. She married a fisherman from a neighboring village, Cheng Yick Tak. In the nineteen-seventies, the couple left China for Hong Kong, where Sister Ping opened a convenience store and gained a reputation as a clever businesswoman. They had four children. In 1981, she went to the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong to apply for a visa, saying that she wished to work in America as a housekeeper. A consular official asked why she wanted to go to America to be a servant. She told him that as a child in school she had learned that the United States was "a civilized country," and that "one could make a living" there. She explained, "It's for the sake of my children's future that I am willing to be a servant."

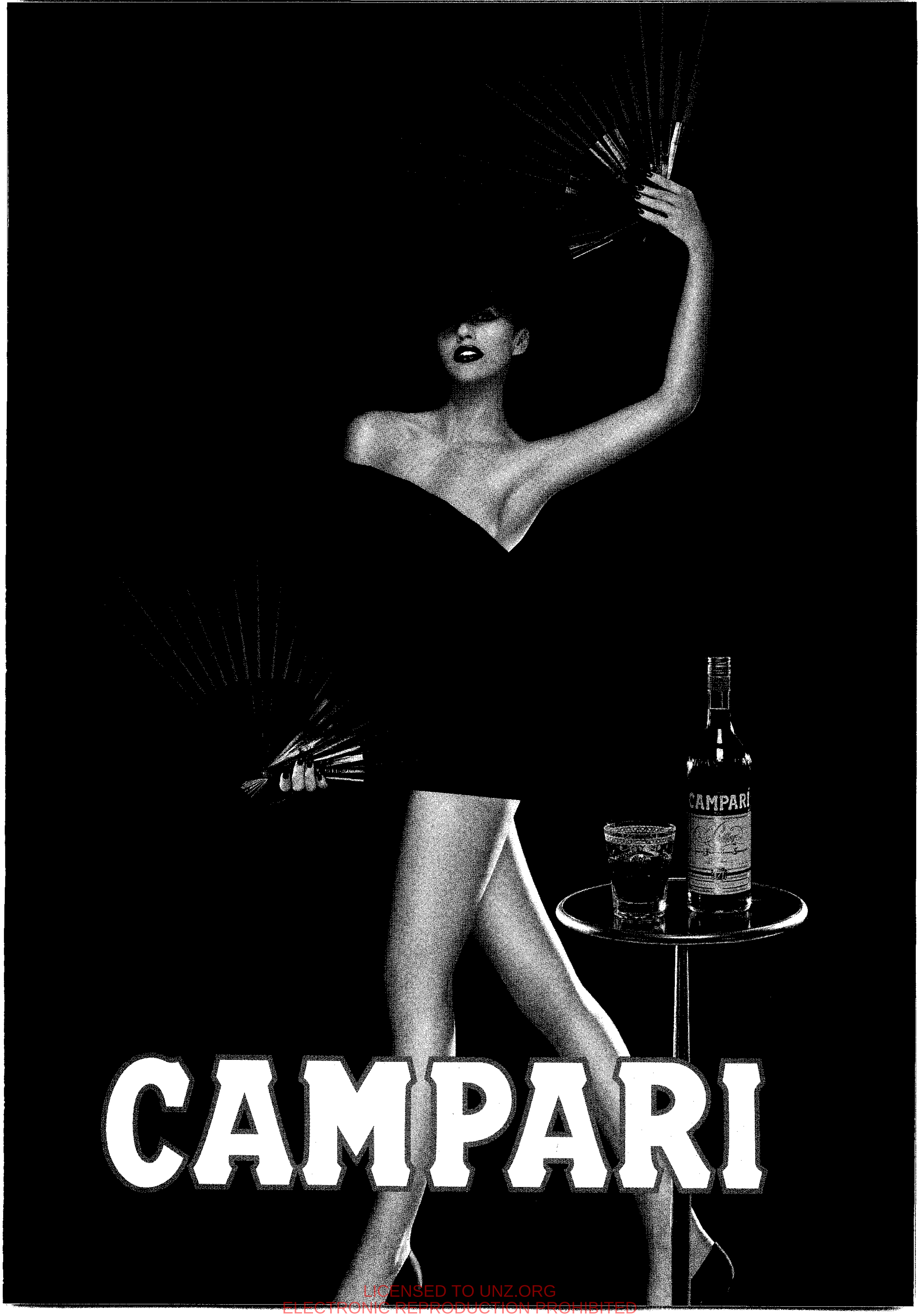
It is unclear whether the visa was granted, or how she made it to the United States, but shortly after her interview Sister Ping entered the country—leaving her husband and young children behind. Upon arriving in New York, she opened a small variety store on Hester Street, and sent for her family. Chinatown's Fujianese community was still new, and the shop became a gathering place for displaced villagers.

During her first years in the city, Sister Ping established a remittance business that helped emigrants send money back to China. Her network of associates in Fujian was so extensive that a New York waiter could bring her a thousand dollars, pay her a ten-dollar commission, and be certain that the next day someone would travel by motorbike to his mother's remote village and deliver the Chinese cash equivalent to her door. Immigrants who worked in the restaurants and garment factories of New York tended to live frugally and send most of their earnings home, and Sister Ping's service was often cheaper and faster than the Bank of China.

At the same time, Sister Ping began developing her smuggling operation. Initially, it was a meticulously run family business. During her trial, it emerged that one of her sisters met passengers in Hong Kong, provided them with false documents, and took them shopping, so that they would look more like international travellers. Her brother managed a staging post in Guatemala; her husband ferried the large amounts of cash that the family had accumulated out of the country; and Sister Ping met new arrivals in California and escorted them to New York. In 1984, when a young Fujianese man, Weng Yu Hui, wanted to come to America, he had a relative get in touch with Sister Ping, who arranged for him to travel from China to Mexico. He and several others hid in the false floor of a truck and were driven to Los Angeles, where Sister Ping was waiting for them. "Congratulations," she told the group. "You have arrived in the United States." She took them to Los Angeles International Airport and flew with them to Newark, sitting several rows away.

As demand for her services grew, Sister Ping was unable to supervise the process as carefully as she had originally. She began to subcontract her operations to various freelancers and affiliates, some of whom were not particularly reliable. In January, 1989, a Canadian snakehead loaded four passengers—one of them a six-year-old Chinese girl—onto a flimsy vinyl raft on the Niagara River so that they could row across to the United States. The raft sank, and all four passengers drowned. U.S. authorities recovered a phone number on one of the bodies, which they eventually connected to Sister Ping's husband. No definite link to Sister Ping was ever established, but officials have long believed that she was behind the operation. Cheng Yick Tak, her husband, is meek by temperament, and "kind of married into a smuggling family," one official told me; over the course of two decades of smuggling activity, he never acted alone.

Even before the Niagara River incident, Canadian authorities had begun investigating the emerging cross-border smuggling trade. In the spring of 1989, a small-time Canadian criminal named Terry Honesburger, who had befriended snakeheads while working at a Chinese restaurant, agreed to help an undercover member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police set up a sting. Honesburger and the Canadian cop, Larry Hay, went to Toronto International Airport and stood by a bank of pay phones. After a few minutes, Sister Ping approached, wearing a gray knit sports jacket and looking impatient. "What took you?" she demanded, in broken English. With her were four Chinese people: two men, a pregnant woman, and a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teen-age girl in a brown leather jacket.

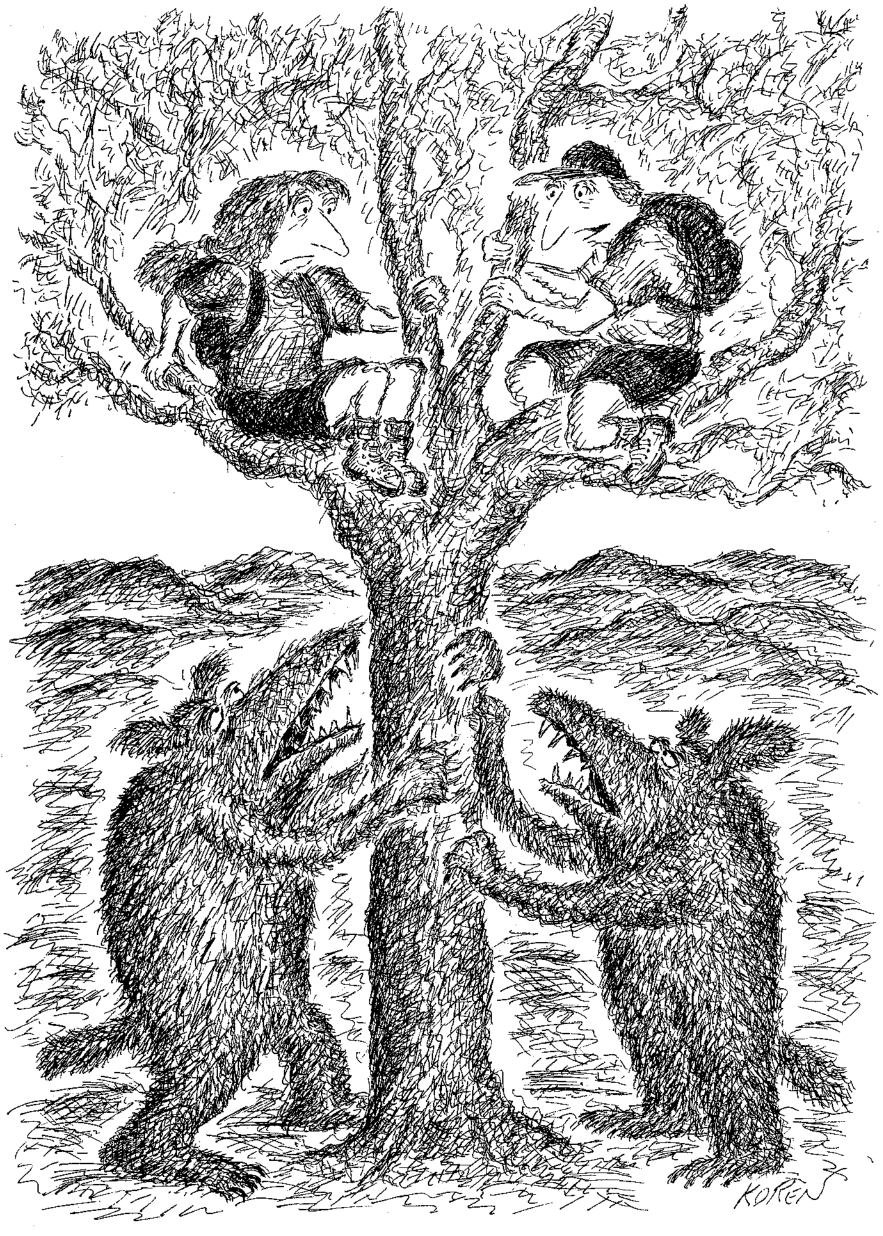
"Are all four to go?" Hay asked her.

"No," she said, indicating the teen-ager. "This one is my daughter."

Sister Ping slid several hundred dollars into a newspaper and handed it to Hay, with the understanding that he and Honesburger would drive the passengers over the border. Several months later, she was arrested in connection with the incident, and pleaded guilty to alien smuggling in Buffalo Federal Court, claiming that the pregnant woman was her cousin. She told the judge, "With my Chinese family background, I had to give family loyalty high priority."

Sister Ping was sentenced to six months in prison in Butler County, Pennsylvania. Her lack of English isolated her from the guards and inmates. When the F.B.I. sent a young Chinese-American agent, Peter Lee, to Pennsylvania to see if she would coöperate in exchange for a reduced sentence, she immediately agreed and happily provided Lee with details about various adversaries in Chinatown's underworld. After serving four months, she was released.

Back in Chinatown, Sister Ping continued to meet Lee periodically and give him information. Lee estimates that they met in person more than ten times. They grew close enough that, when one of Sister Ping's daughters was engaged to be married, Lee was invited to the wedding. When, in 1992, the F.B.I. discovered that Sister Ping was still involved in smuggling, the agency terminated the relationship.



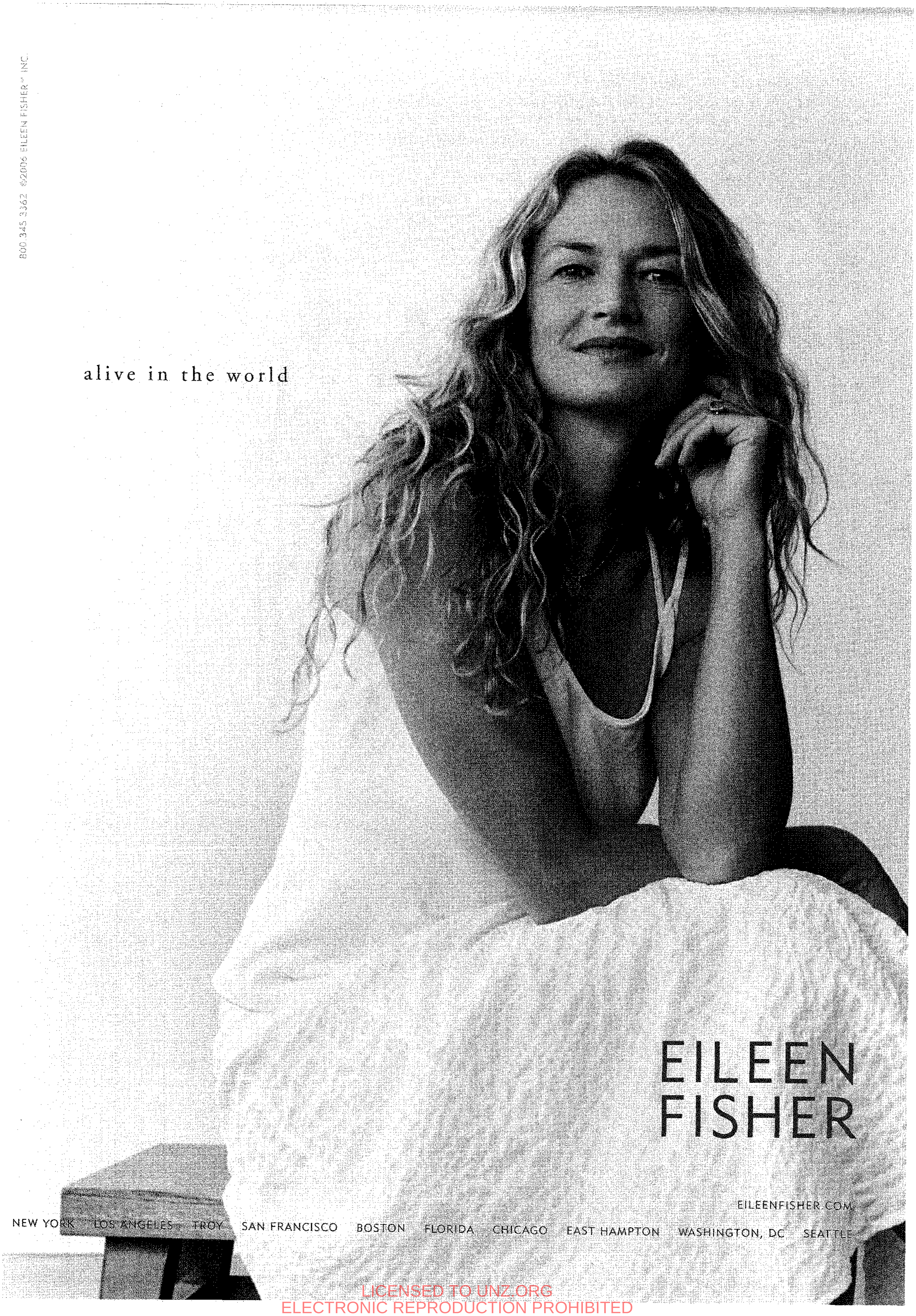
*"Tell them how hard we've worked to protect their habitat."*

The F.B.I.'s New York field office occupies several floors of a federal building in downtown Manhattan, not far from Fujianese East Broadway. I went there recently to see agents Konrad Motyka and Bill McMurray, who oversaw the bureau's decade-long investigation of Sister Ping's organization. We met in a small conference room. Motyka is forty-two and formidably built, with a clipped mustache and small, intense eyes. He started working on Asian organized crime in the early nineteen-nineties. At about this time, he said, Sister Ping joined forces with a brutal criminal group: the Fuk Ching gang. Although she had no history of violence, her decision suggested a willingness to make almost any concession for the sake of her business, which had begun to resemble an empire. (She had recently purchased the five-story brick building at 47 East Broadway for a reported three million dollars.)

The leader of the Fuk Ching was a charismatic young murderer named Guo Liang Qi, who was better known as Ah Kay. Short but muscular, with a pompadour of black hair, Ah Kay left Fujian in 1981 and was smuggled to Los Angeles via Ecuador. He then made his way to New York, where he joined the fledgling gang. Fuk Ching is an abbreviation of *Fukien Chingnian*—"young Fujianese"—and many of the members were teen-agers. In March, 1984, a superior ordered Ah Kay to kill an insubordinate colleague. It was the first of five murders to which he pleaded guilty a decade later.

Fuk Ching gang members wore black, streaked their hair with bright colors, and loitered on street corners in black BMWs. "They would always be in knots of three or four, like mushrooms," Motyka told me. "They weren't around in the daytime, but as soon as the sun started going they'd sort of sprout out of the storefronts and the restaurants." Wary of shakedowns, they had girlfriends hold their guns in backpacks, but their preferred weapons for street violence were knives, hammers, and ice picks.

In 1985, Ah Kay, then a *Dai Ma*, or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low-level leader, in the gang, encountered Sister Ping for the first time. He and several others robbed her house, holding her daughter at gunpoint. They didn't find as much cash as Ah Kay had hoped, and some months later he sent several followers to rob the house again. This time they found twenty thousand dollars stashed in the fridge. (In Sister Ping's 2005 trial, a prosecutor asked the jury to consider "whether a legitimate businesswoman keeps her profits in her refrigerator.")

Shortly afterward, in March, 1986, Ah Kay was convicted on an unrelated count of attempted grand larceny. He served two and a half years in prison, and was deported to China, but he soon returned, pursuing a typically circuitous route, from Hong Kong to Thailand to Belize to Mexico to Guatemala, and, finally, to San Diego. Remarkably, in 1991, Ah Kay, who had committed multiple homicides, was granted political asylum in the United States. By that time, he had become a snakehead and the leader of the Fuk Ching gang.

"My underlings were in China," Ah Kay later testified. "They recruited aliens who wanted to come. They then shipped those people to Thailand." As demand grew, the snakeheads could not channel people through Thailand quickly enough. The influx of Chinese passengers arriving at J.F.K. from Thailand with false documents prompted a crackdown by the authorities at the Bangkok airport.

At this point, Chinese snakeheads shifted their operations to the sea. According to Ko-lin Chin, a criminologist at Rutgers University who has interviewed dozens of snakeheads, ships were first used on the short trip from Fujian Province to Taiwan, but longer routes quickly emerged. As Chin explained, the ships made economic sense, since hundreds of passengers could be moved at once, without the need for plane tickets or forged documents.

Ah Kay developed a particular specialty: as the ships approached the coast of America—still safely in international waters—he dispatched fishing boats, piloted by Vietnamese fishermen and manned by Fuk Ching strongmen, to meet them. "Off-loading" was a crude and dangerous affair. "The two boats got closer to one another," Ah Kay later explained. "The fishing boat was very small; the big boat was rather big. So we would wait until the big wave rise and then, you know, the level of the fishing boat came up and . . . the people from the big boat would jump over to the small boat." In rough seas, people occasionally fell short and clung to the smaller boat, running the risk of being crushed when the two boats slammed together.

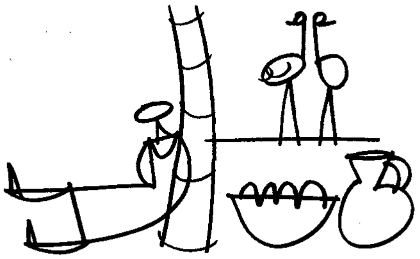
In the summer of 1992, one of Sister Ping's business partners visited Ah Kay at his apartment, on Hester Street, telling him that Sister Ping had heard of his success with boats and could use his expertise. Ah Kay said that he would be happy to collaborate, and, some time later, he received a phone call from Sister Ping. He immediately apologized for the burglaries.

"That's what happened in the past," Sister Ping replied. "We're talking business now."

A boat was due to arrive soon, and Sister Ping offered to pay him seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars to off-load it. A few weeks later, Ah Kay's men met the ship, off the coast of Massachusetts. There were more than a hundred passengers, and the gang transported them to shore, loaded them into U-Haul trucks, and drove them to a Brooklyn warehouse. Ah Kay and Sister Ping decided to work together again.

Once Michael Chen had made his down payment in Fuzhou, in 1991, he set off with several others from his village, travelling by bus and train to the city of Kunming, a day's drive from China's southern border with Burma. They stayed in a cheap hotel for a week; then, one night, snakeheads hid them among bags of rice in the back of a truck and drove them closer to the border.

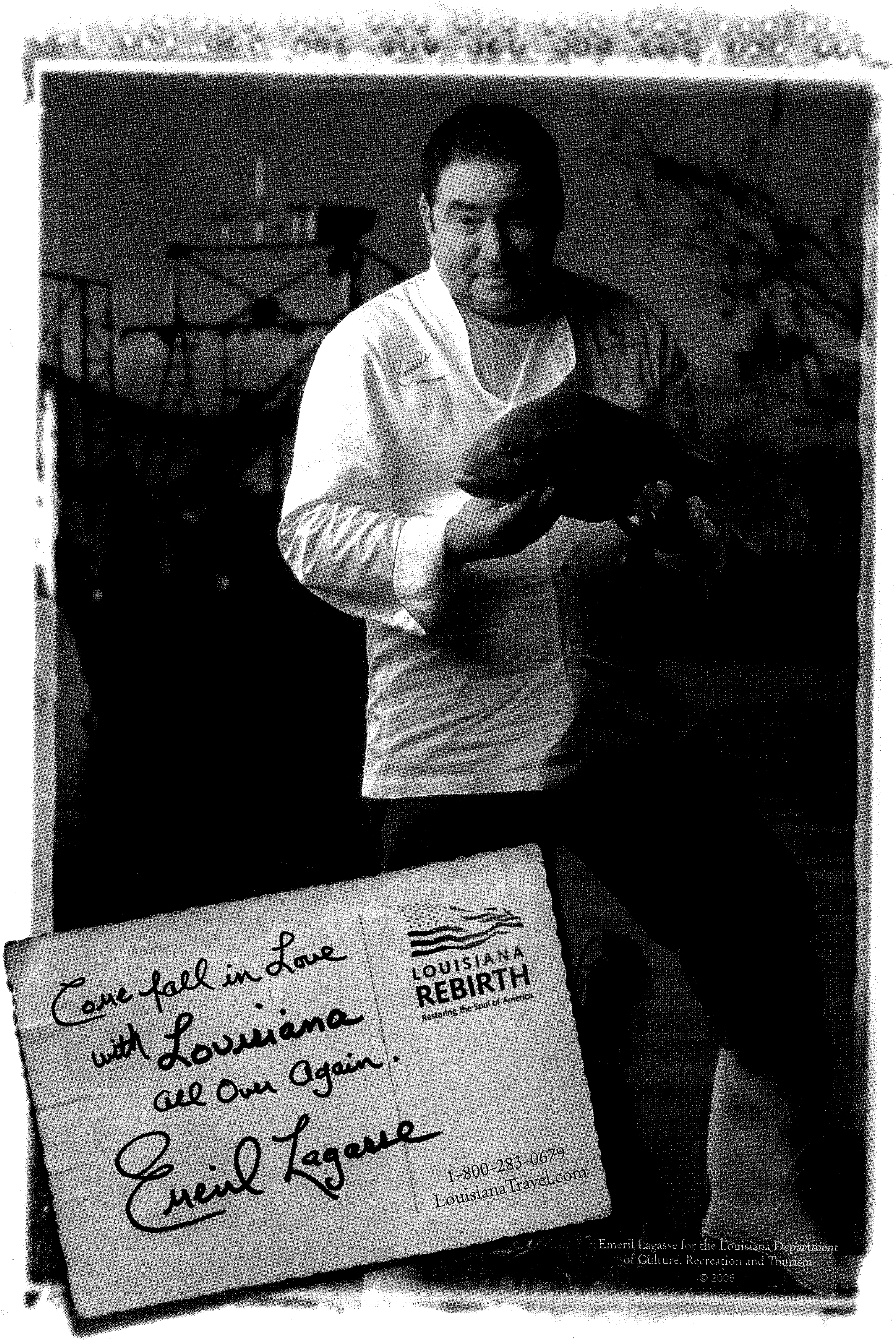
"At the beginning, we weren't scared," Chen told me. But when they reached the border they realized that their situation was perilous: the checkpoint was closely monitored by armed guards. During the night, the snakeheads led Chen and a dozen others across the border into Burma.



A forbidding mountain range separates Burma from Thailand, and the travellers bought supplies for the month-long trek. "In the daytime it was hot," Chen said. "At night it's freezing. . . . We could not light a fire, because if you light in the mountains people will see it." Along the way, the group passed the remains of other Chinese who did not survive the mountains, their decomposing bodies covered with banana leaves. The smugglers' route led directly through the Golden Triangle, where much of the world's heroin supply is produced. Chen recalls crossing this territory at night, dodging the drug harvesters' spotlights, which panned across the poppy fields.

After arriving in Bangkok, in early 1992, Chen was kept in a safe house. The American crackdown at the Bangkok airport had begun, so the safe houses were uncomfortably crowded. On three occasions, Chen's snakeheads failed to bribe local Thai officials, and the house was raided. Once, he was arrested and thrown into a Thai prison for a month, until the snakeheads could reach his parents and get them to bail him out. They had to take out a loan, and his father worked "day and night, like a machine," to pay it off, Chen told me. He was stuck in Thailand for more than a year.

While Chen languished in Bangkok, preparations were under way in New York to purchase the ship that would transport him to America. Weng Yu Hui, the man Sister Ping had smuggled to Los Angeles in 1984, was coming into his own as a snakehead. When Weng first told Sister Ping of his ambitions, she joked, "Oh, now you're my competitor!" But in early 1992, along with several other snakeheads, they jointly chartered a cruise ship called the Najd II to transport three hundred passengers from Bangkok to the United States. The ship stopped in Mombasa, Kenya, where the captain decided that he wasn't being paid enough to transport the seven-million-dollar human cargo, and quit. It fell to Weng to devise a way of retrieving the stranded passengers, only twenty of whom were cus-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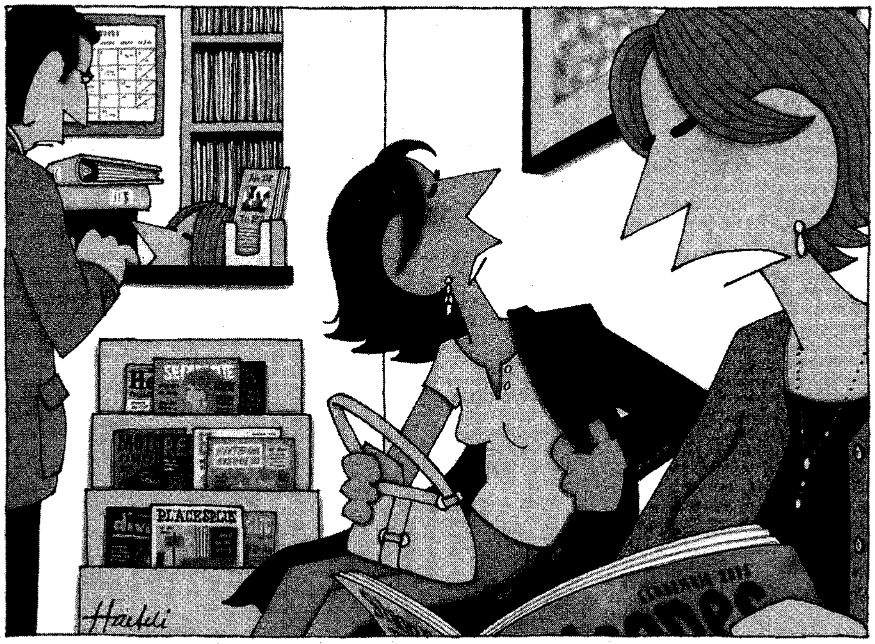


*"I try not to judge my doctors by the art work in their waiting rooms."*

tomers of Sister Ping. He met with Ah Kay and a Taiwanese snakehead, Lee Peng Fei, at a midtown Manhattan restaurant. It was agreed that Ah Kay would provide some of the capital to buy a new ship, and that, in exchange, he would be awarded the lucrative job of off-loading the passengers when they arrived. As it happened, Ah Kay was still owed three hundred thousand dollars for his first job with Sister Ping. He asked her to wire the money to Lee Peng Fei on his behalf.

She did so, and Lee used the money to purchase a Panama-registered tramp steamer, the Tong Sern, in Singapore. Lee hired a crew and a captain, Amir Tobing, as well as a young Chinese man, Kin Sin Lee, to act as an onboard enforcer. The snakeheads had decided that it would be wasteful to send the Tong Sern to Mombasa empty, so they arranged to pick up ninety Chinese passengers, including Michael Chen, in Thailand. "*This* is the boat?" Chen thought when he first saw the dilapidated steamer, in February, 1993. That night, snakeheads had transported him from the safe house to a beach not far from Bangkok. They loaded Chen and a dozen others onto a speedboat and headed for international waters. Some of the passengers, having worked as sailors in China, deemed the ship too small to cross the Atlantic. But they had little choice, and were ushered into the hold by Kin Sin Lee and his armed associates. At sea, the Panamanian flag was lowered and a Honduran flag was raised; the name Tong Sern, painted on the bow, was replaced by a new one: Golden Venture. After a stop off Pattaya, Thailand, to take on more passengers, the ship steamed through the Strait of Malacca and across the Indian Ocean to Mombasa.

When Sister Ping's customers in Kenya saw the Golden Venture, all but two refused to board, preferring to try their luck in Mombasa to risking passage on so rickety a vessel. The remaining stranded emigrants were crammed into the twenty-by-forty-foot hold, alongside Michael Chen and the others who were already on board. The space was dark and sweltering, rank with cigarette smoke and sweat. One bathroom serviced the nearly three hundred passengers. As the journey wore on, supplies dwindled, and the passengers were given only a small portion of rice and peanuts, or dried vegetables, each day.

During the months at sea, a society of sorts emerged. A pudgy young man who had been a village doctor in China tended to the sick; a teen-ager became known for giving good massages. Chen helped crew members prepare meals, which earned him an extra allotment of water. When the weather was clear and the ship was in international waters, Kin Sin Lee occasionally allowed the passengers to go up on deck. They fished with makeshift rods.

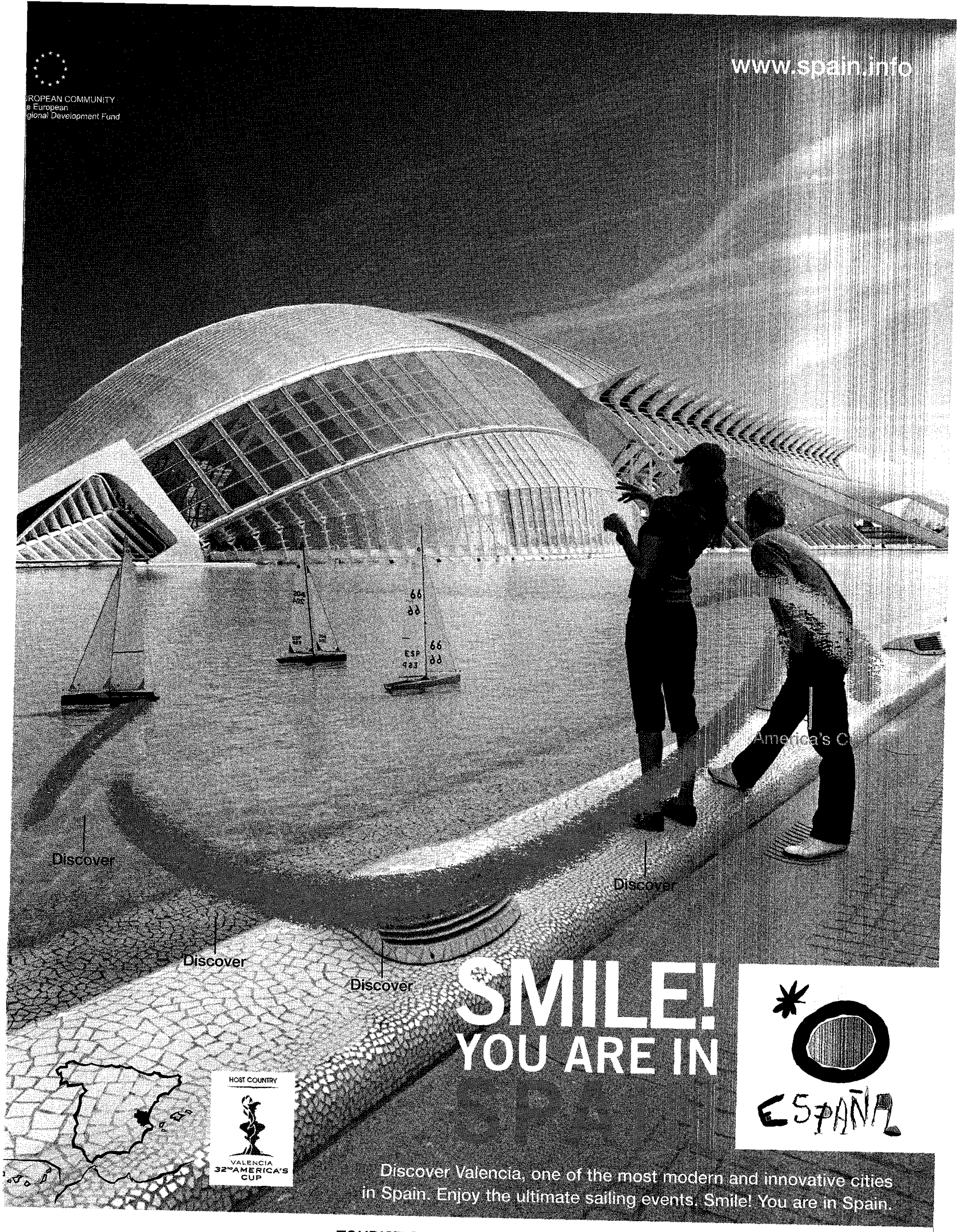
Ah Kay planned to off-load the Golden Venture in the Atlantic. But by early 1993 his gang had fallen into disarray. An ambitious deputy, Dan Xin Lin, had been running the gang's day-to-day smuggling operations, and he became frustrated because Ah Kay was growing rich from the proceeds and he wasn't. He decided to split from the Fuk Ching and start his own snakehead business, taking some of the gang members with him. The defection angered Ah Kay, and on January 8, 1993, he instructed a Fuk Ching member to kill Dan Xin Lin.

The assassin found Dan Xin in a beeper store on Allen Street, with two associates. He fired several shots, killing the two men. Then he pointed his .380 automatic at Dan Xin's head and pulled the trigger. But the clip was empty, or the gun jammed—and Dan Xin fled the store.

Worried that the police would link him to the shootings, Ah Kay went into hiding in China. He left management of the gang's activities to his two younger brothers, who would be responsible for meeting the Golden Venture when it reached the United States.

Dan Xin was eager for revenge. On the evening of May 24, 1993, two weeks before the Golden Venture arrived, Ah Kay's brothers were at a safe house in Teaneck, New Jersey. Shortly after 7 P.M., a van pulled up around the corner. Dan Xin, dressed in black and carrying an Uzi submachine gun, led four men into the house, where they shot and stabbed one of Ah Kay's brothers and two other Fuk Ching members. The other brother escaped, but the men caught up with him on a nearby street and shot him repeatedly.

The killers were stopped by the police about five miles from Teaneck, as they sped toward the George Washington Bridge. All five were smeared with blood. At the ensuing trial, one of the assailants, when asked about the motive, testified that Dan Xin's faction planned to retrieve the Golden Venture's passengers and collect their fees.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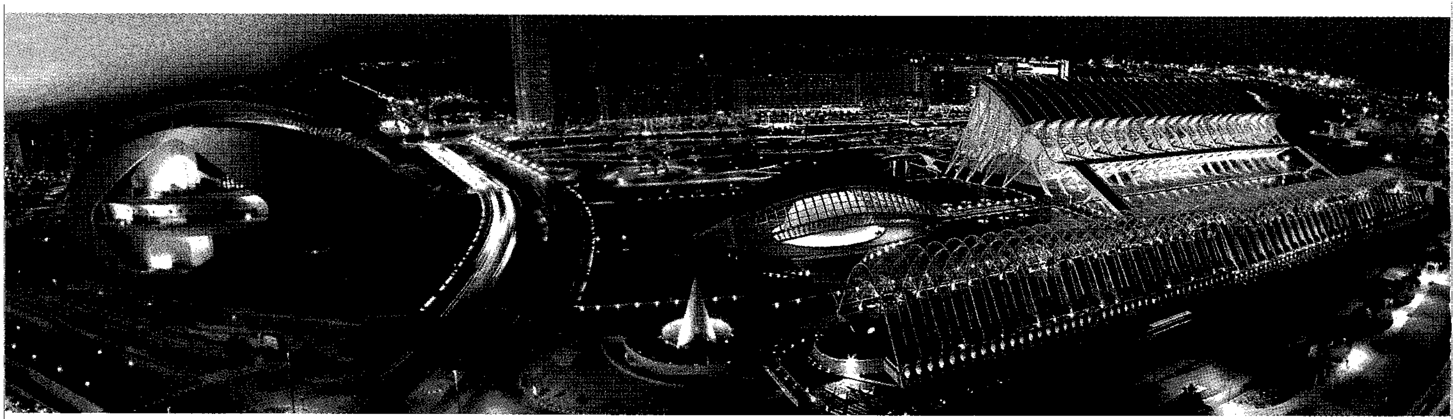
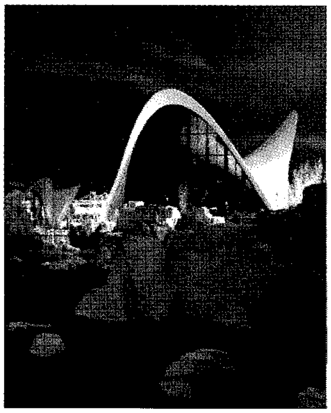


# City of the Future

**VISITORS DRAWN TO VALENCIA** for its sunny Mediterranean mien now have more reasons than ever to put this city on their itinerary.

A spectacular new performing arts complex designed by the Valencia-born architect, artist, and engineer Santiago Calatrava—known on these shores for designing the new World Trade Center transportation hub—is set to open in October. The city's old quarter, where buildings reflect Valencia's golden age during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, has been faithfully restored. A "city of the future" that stands between the old quarter and the sea—the City of Arts & Sciences, also imagined by native son Calatrava—has been evolving for four years. And the revitalized waterfront has the honor of hosting the esteemed 32nd America's Cup international sailing competition in 2007.



## INSIDE AN ARCHITECTURAL MASTERPIECE

Musician by musician, talents from throughout the world are making their way to cultural, cosmopolitan Valencia to audition for the new orchestra, one of the performing arts groups to be housed in Calatrava's spectacular $307 million Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía (Queen Sofía Palace of the Arts).

Zubin Mehta, the president of the Festival of the Mediterranean; and the Palau's music director, Lorin Maazel, are conducting the auditions. The orchestra's official concert season opens in October, 2006. Palau programming also includes the Operalia event, a prestigious competition for opera singers overseen by the Spanish tenor Placido Domingo.

Surrounded by gigantic reflecting pools and set in seventeen acres of lush gardens, the towering glass-and-steel performing arts complex resembles a massive knight's helmet. Two symmetrical cutaway shields appear to embrace its exterior. They are crowned by a sweeping 778-foot-long steel plume atop roofs that glisten with ceramic tile. The center's four venues for opera, theatre, and dance can accommodate nearly 4,500 people and feature technological innovations bound to dazzle audiences.

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## VALENCIA WELCOMES 2007 AMERICA'S CUP

The selection of Valencia as the host of the America's Cup event in 2007 acknowledges the city's maritime past as well as its vital present and exciting future.

When the competing vessels arrive in port between June 23rd–July 7, 2007, crews and spectators will find a new sailing village. Valencia's recent waterfront improvements include a 9,800-foot balcony overlooking the sea, and the America's Cup Park, where fans will be able to follow the prestigious international competition on giant TV screens.

This is the first time Europe is hosting the America's Cup in 152 years. Preliminary competitions take place here this spring and summer.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TURESPAÑA

**To find out more, visit Spain.info, okspain.org, and TurisValencia.es.**

With Ah Kay's brothers dead, and Dan Xin's gang in police custody, there was no one to meet the ship. When Lee Peng Fei, the Taiwanese snakehead, learned of the Teaneck massacre, he radioed the Golden Venture to say that the small boats would not be coming. The crew decided to run the ship aground in the Rockaways.

The following night, the snakeheads aboard the Golden Venture informed Michael Chen and the others that they were about to land. The ship jolted when it plowed into the sandbar, and dozens of passengers mobbed the single ladder leading to the deck. "I almost squeezed to death on the bottom," Chen told me. By the time he emerged from the hold, there were sirens in the distance, and a helicopter hovered overhead.

In June, 1993, federal prosecutors indicted the crew of the Golden Venture on charges of conspiracy and smuggling, and the F.B.I. intensified its investigation of the Fuk Ching gang. Ah Kay was reportedly holed up in a walled compound in Fujian, accompanied by his most trusted bodyguard, whose gang nickname was Stupid. In late August, Ah Kay made his way to Hong Kong, where, acting on a tip, the Royal Hong Kong Police arrested him at a restaurant. With Ah Kay in custody, F.B.I. teams in New York were raiding buildings and rounding up the rest of the gang. All the major figures were eventually indicted on charges of racketeering, conspiracy, murder, extortion, robbery, kidnapping, assault, gun possession, gambling, and alien smuggling.

Ah Kay waived extradition and came to the United States, where he pleaded guilty to the murder charges, was imprisoned in New York, and volunteered to coöperate with the F.B.I. Those who debriefed him say that he was an exceptionally intelligent turncoat, who came to meetings equipped with legal pads outlining the information he was able to supply. "The cream rises to the top, even in gangs," one official who dealt with him told me. "It was like having a good Fujianese F.B.I. agent on the case." The snakehead Weng Yu Hui was arrested in New York in April, 1994. The following November, his Taiwanese as-

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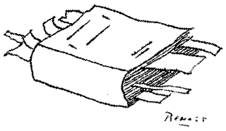

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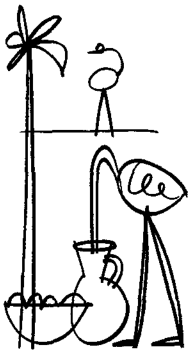
sociate, Lee Peng Fei, was polishing a Mercedes outside his Bangkok apartment when he was arrested by the Royal Thai Police.

Law-enforcement officials carefully amassed evidence against Sister Ping. Several months after the Golden Venture incident, Konrad Motyka and other F.B.I. agents raided the building at 47 East Broadway and recovered a laminating machine, passports, driver's licenses, Social Security cards, and employment-authorization cards, all in other people's names—a trove that prosecutors later described as the "tools of the alien-smuggling trade." But by the fall of 1993 Sister Ping had already gone "out of pocket," Motyka said. On September 20, 1994, she entered Hong Kong, using her own passport for the last time. After that trip, a prosecutor later observed, "Sister Ping, at least on paper, ceased to exist."

As the organizers of the Golden Venture fled or were arrested, about half of the ship's passengers were deported; others were held in I.N.S. detention facilities across the country. The majority of the detainees, including Michael Chen, ended up in York, Pennsylvania. The passengers were under the impression that they would not be held long; they had heard that it was not difficult for Chinese migrants to obtain asylum in America. But the Golden Venture scandal had embarrassed the Clinton Administration—critics charged that America's policy on asylum had become a magnet for illegal Chinese—and all but a few passengers had their claims denied.



A number of lawyers in York appealed the immigration-court decisions on the passengers' behalf. The Golden Venture's passengers were being made an example of in the United States, the lawyers argued, but they would also be made an example of in China. Meanwhile, Michael Chen and others remained in prison, where, the York County warden told me, they were exemplary inmates. Chen swept and mopped the wing where the Chinese detainees were held, prepared meals, and became the inmates' barber. He asked a local church group for a Chinese-English dictionary, and when the guards finished reading their newspapers he would say, "Gee, don't throw that away." Occasionally, there were stories about the Golden Venture in the papers, and the detainees worked through the articles, word by word.

On February 3, 1997, the *Times* ran a front-page story, by Celia Dugger, which noted that many of the Golden Venture's passengers were still being detained, and observed that they might have won asylum "had they come ashore a year earlier—when George Bush was President." Eleven days later, Bill Clinton pardoned the final fifty-three Golden Venture passengers. They had served forty-two months in prison. Soon after their release, several were approached by snakeheads demanding the balance of their fees.

In the four years during which the passengers were detained in York, Sister Ping continued her smuggling business from the village of Shengmei, in Fujian. She settled into her family's four-story, yellow-and-white house, which had hand-painted balconies and a pagoda on the roof. After the Golden Venture incident, it was no longer feasible to send ships directly to U.S. shores, but she continued shipping people to Central and South America. In 1998, she sent a shipload of passengers to the coast off Guatemala. The off-loading went awry, and fourteen people drowned.

Though U.S. authorities knew where Sister Ping was, they could not arrest her, because America does not have an extradition agreement with China. F.B.I. agents, assuming that she might be travelling with false papers, worked with Fujianese informants to assemble a family tree. In April, 2000, U.S. authorities in Hong Kong received a tip that Sister Ping's son had entered the city and would soon be departing on a Korean Air jet.

Dozens of Hong Kong police officers went to the airport, and detectives staked out the Korean Air desk. A woman who resembled Sister Ping appeared near the desk, and the officers arrested her. When they searched her purse, they found three Belizean passports that did not belong to her, several loose passport photos, and thirty-one thousand dollars in three neat stacks.

It turned out that Sister Ping had a luxury apartment in Hong Kong, and had been passing in and out of the city. Detectives searched the apartment and found two customers, presumably waiting to be flown to their next destination, and several plane tickets bearing the name "Lilly Zhang." They recovered a Belizean passport, also in the name of Lilly Zhang; the photograph in the passport was of Sister Ping. The authorities later determined that, as Lilly Zhang, Sister Ping had made more than fifty trips to foreign countries—including the United States—in the three months prior to her arrest.

Sister Ping fought extradition for three years. Finally, in 2003, Becky Chan, a legal attaché to the F.B.I., accompanied her on a United Airlines flight back to the United States. Exchanging her Rolex watch for plastic flexicuffs, Sister Ping was reserved and polite, and, as Chan recalled, "she was adamant that she didn't do anything wrong, and that as soon as she hit New York the judge would release her."

Initially, F.B.I. officials hoped that Sister Ping would offer to coöperate with them, as she had in the past. When she was taken into custody, she was carrying a black address book that listed immigration contacts in Thailand, Malaysia, Belize, and Russia. "The potential for uncovering international corruption would have been tremendous," Bill McMurray told me. "But she chose to fight it instead."

The trial began in May, and lasted for a month. David Burns, an assistant U.S. attorney, described Sister Ping as "one of the most powerful and most successful alien smugglers of our time." The prosecution's case relied heavily on former snakeheads, among them Ah Kay and Weng Yu Hui. Sister Ping's lawyer, Lawrence Hochheiser, repeatedly returned to the credibility of these men, and suggested that they were testifying in exchange for reduced sentences. "These men are killers," Burns was quick to concede. "But they're killers she's hired."

Hochheiser insisted that his client was primarily a businesswoman—that running an underground bank was the extent of her criminal activity. "We've got the tail wagging the dog here," he

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said. "This is a money business that is being used to tie Cheng Chui Ping to the alien-smuggling business." In his closing remarks, he invoked Arthur Miller's play "The Crucible."

On June 22, 2005, the jury found Sister Ping guilty of conspiracy to smuggle aliens and take hostages, money laundering, and trafficking in ransom proceeds. The verdict may have come as a surprise to her: the F.B.I. had informants in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, who said that leading up to the trial she had packed her bags, telling people that she would be going home any day.

The press took evident satisfaction in the conviction ("EVIL INCARNATE" ran a typical trial headline, from the *Daily News*), but the Fujianese community in Chinatown was less enthusiastic. "A lot of people in Chinatown are saying that we're putting Robin Hood on trial," Steven Wong, the Fujianese community leader, told me. The *World Journal* reported that villagers in Shengmei had volunteered to do prison time on Sister Ping's behalf; they described her as a living Buddha.

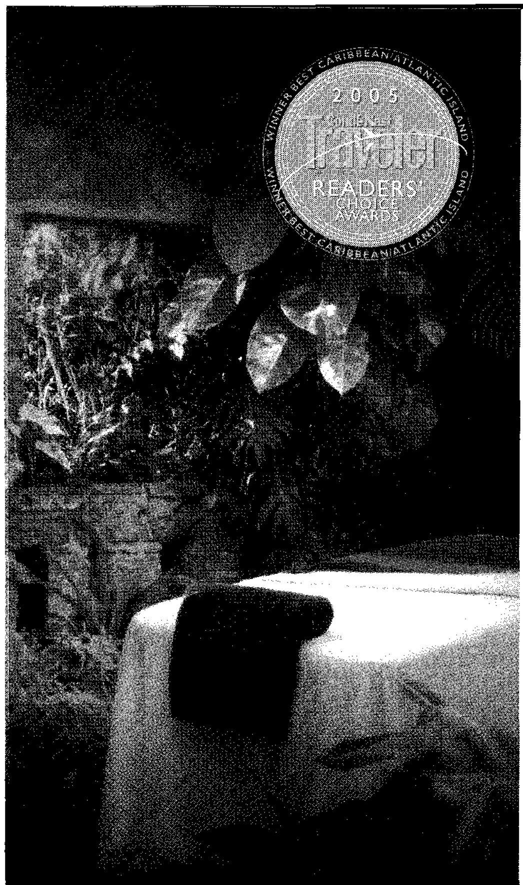
Sister Ping was sentenced on March 16, 2006. That morning, two dozen family members and supporters entered the courtroom. Sister Ping appeared, dressed in a long-sleeved gray T-shirt and blue pants, and looking thin, her hair grown long and streaked with gray, and solemnly acknowledged her family. After a few preliminary arguments by the lawyers, the judge, Michael Mukasey, asked Sister Ping if there was anything she wanted to say. Hochheiser replied that because his client would be appealing the verdict, and might accidentally say something to prejudice the appeal, he had advised her not to speak.

But when he sat down Sister Ping slowly rose. She gestured for her interpreter, a tall Chinese woman who sat against one wall, and proceeded to deliver a strange, extended monologue. "I only cried once in court," she began, and explained that it was when witnesses recounted how Ah Kay had robbed her house. "I was a small businesswoman in Chinatown," she went on. "If Ah Kay had come and robbed me those times, you can imagine how many other people took advantage of me." Huddled next to the interpreter, she spoke in a deep, assertive voice, slowly at first, and then more quickly, so that the interpreter could hardly keep up. She explained that in every major episode discussed at trial she was the victim: at the Toronto airport, she had not been smuggling the Chinese passengers but simply bringing them money; she had been extorted and intimidated by Ah Kay and Weng Yu Hui; snakeheads had lied when they testified that they were affiliated with her; the evidence in the trial had been faked. "Everybody can tell you that Sister Ping is working in the store every day," she said. How could she have been a snakehead as well?

As she rambled on, she stared at Judge Mukasey; her hands remained clasped in front of her, and occasionally she gestured for emphasis, sometimes leaning forward to scribble Chinese ideographs on scrap paper so that her interpreter could better understand her. "When I had my trial, I didn't want to say anything," she continued. "All these tainted witnesses have families, and I also want them to get benefits and go home. So whatever they said, I did not attack them." She emphasized that she had done the things she did out of concern for her family. One of the prosecutors, Leslie Brown, was pregnant, and Sister Ping turned to her. "Ms. Brown is about to be a mother," she said in an icy tone. "I congratulate you. Once you become a mother you will understand me."

After more than an hour, Sister Ping sat down. Judge Mukasey, visibly irritated, said that it was not his custom to deliver lectures when he handed out sentences, but in light of Sister Ping's "lengthy exercise in self-justification" he would make an exception. Her version of events "defies belief," he said, and pointed out that while the witnesses who testified against her may have committed brutal crimes, they had also pleaded guilty to those crimes and coöperated with the government. He delivered the maximum sentence: thirty-five years in prison. As Sister Ping was led out of the courtroom, she smiled at her family and waved.

When I asked Michael Chen about Sister Ping, he echoed the positive views that many Fujianese express about her. "She's a very nice lady," Chen told me. "Even if some of her customers died by accident, it was not her fault." He com-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pared her favorably to Ah Kay, whom he called "a monster." (After testifying, Ah Kay, who was described by one of the prosecutors who put him on the stand as "an incredibly violent man with zero regard for human life," was deemed to have satisfied his sentence with time served. He is now a free man.)

When Bill Clinton pardoned the last of the Golden Venture passengers, he placed them on "humanitarian parole." Parolees can apply for renewable work permits, but they have none of the privileges associated with asylum or green-card status. Moreover, in the absence of a Presidential or congressional grant, this parole creates an indefinite legal limbo: there is no process for graduating to permanent-resident status.

Upon being released from the York detention center, the passengers of the Golden Venture fanned out across the country. Michael Chen moved to Columbus, Ohio, and eventually opened his restaurant. But he worries that he could be deported at any time. In May, 2001, Zeng Hua Zheng, another passenger, who was living in Aurora, Colorado, was suddenly deported; soon afterward, the York lawyers who represent the Golden Venture's passengers introduced a "private bill" to Congress which would obtain permanent status for the parolees. Private bills pass only by unanimous congressional approval, and so far the bill has failed twice. But the lawyers continue to resubmit it: as long as the parolees' status is under consideration by Congress, they cannot be deported.

Perhaps the most telling illustration of the allure this country has for the Fujianese is the number of Golden Venture passengers who endured the voyage, imprisonment, and deportation, only to return to the United States. In 1998, Wang Wu Dong, who had been imprisoned and deported, was re-apprehended when a snakehead powerboat—the Oops II—ran aground off the Jersey shore. According to Peter Cohn, a filmmaker who has interviewed several of the passengers for a new documentary, scores of those who were deported have returned illegally.

Justin Yu, the journalist for the *World Journal*, says that disasters like the Golden Venture do not discourage emigrants, because, considering the stakes, such calamities represent an acceptable risk. "Acceptable risk, acceptable cruelty, acceptable lousy treatment, acceptable long trip, there's no toilet. It's *acceptable*," he said. "Because of the comparison: the life there, and the life here."

While ships no longer deposit smuggled Fujianese directly on U.S. shores, officials say that there is no evidence to indicate that the total number of Fujianese entering the country illegally has diminished in the years since the Golden Venture incident. China is certainly more prosperous today than it was a decade ago, but a study by Zai Liang, an expert in migration at SUNY Albany, found that the snakehead trade is driven less by absolute poverty than by "relative deprivation"—and China's new prosperity has only widened the gap between the rich and the poor. A recent report from the Government Accountability Office noted that between 1997 and 1999 the number of aliens apprehended while being smuggled into the United States increased by nearly eighty per cent. The price for passage has risen to seventy thousand dollars, and new organizations have devised routes through Canada and Mexico. According to a federal indictment in the late nineties, a consortium of Fujianese and Mohawk Indians smuggled thousands of people through a sovereign reservation, which straddles the border with Canada. The group made an estimated hundred and seventy million dollars in two years.

Sister Ping is appealing her conviction. Meanwhile, the restaurant at 47 East Broadway still does a brisk business, and Sister Ping's husband and one of her daughters, Monica, are there every day. F.B.I. officials suspect that they could potentially take over the family's smuggling operation; however, while Cheng Yick Tak was previously convicted of alien smuggling, no one in the family is under investigation. Along Allen Street, some way from 47 East Broadway, a modest white structure houses the Church of Grace for the Fujianese. Recently, I spoke with the pastor and with a member of the congregation. They told me that, every week, they take a moment during the Sunday service to welcome new arrivals to the city. Every Sunday, five or ten congregants stand up. ♦

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### ANNALS OF THE ROAD

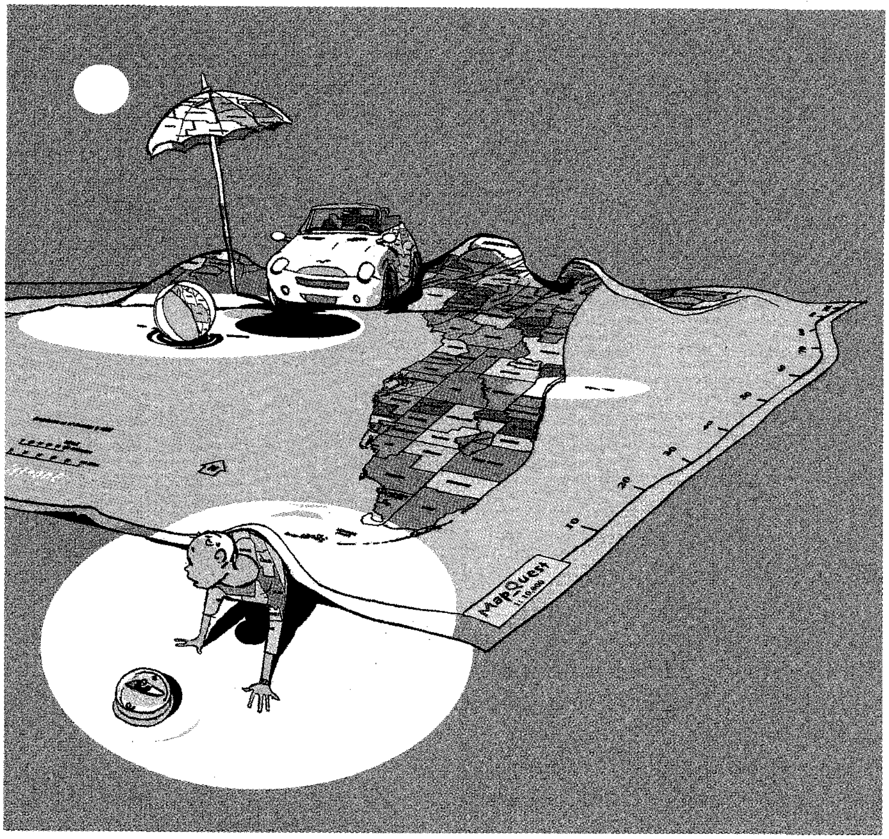
# GETTING THERE

*The science of driving directions.*

### BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

It is a testament both to the early allure of the automobile and to the difficulty of travelling very far in one that, in 1907, Andrew McNally II, the grandson of the co-founder of Rand McNally & Company, chose to spend his honeymoon in Milwaukee. He and his bride drove there, from their home town of Chicago. The way was mostly unpaved and unmarked. In those days, there were no route numbers or state roads; in Wisconsin, there were merely old cart and carriage thoroughfares, whose primary purpose was the conveyance of food from farm to market. It wasn't yet clear how drivers would find their way around. Navigation depended, mainly, on asking people along the way where to go next—an untenable state of affairs, it would seem, as long as the drivers were men, which most of them were.

Rand McNally started out printing railway tickets and flyers, and then, in the eighteen-seventies, branched out into the business of publishing wax-engraved maps for gold prospectors and other hardy tourists. These were maps more of terrain than of roads through it.



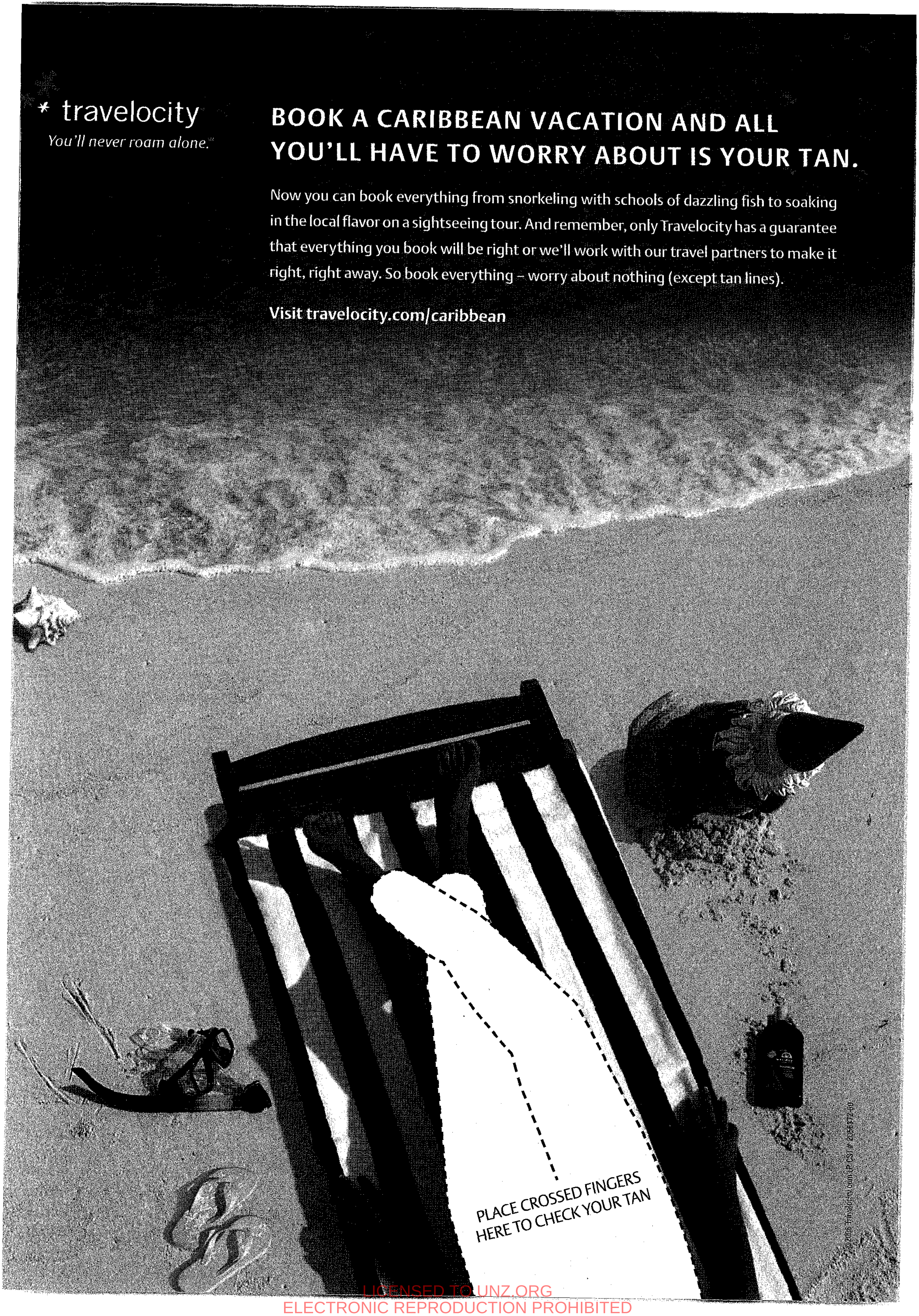
*Navigation devices have been around nearly as long as the automobile.*

Still, Andrew McNally II had a sense that the automobile might enhance the way-finding side of the business, and so, on this honeymoon trip, he strapped a camera onto the front fender of his car and, at every junction—every right or left turn—stopped and snapped a photograph. He and his bride did the same on the return trip. Back in Chicago, McNally compiled the photographs into a booklet, with a little arrow in each photograph indicating the proper direction to take. The booklet was called a Photo-Auto Guide and was essentially a driver's-eye view of the way to Milwaukee, at least as it looked that spring. (Obsolescence loomed; a new barn or a fallen oak could alter the appearance of the road.)

In 1909, an engineer named J. W. Jones invented a device called the Jones Live-Map, which connected to a car's odometer. It consisted of a glass-enclosed dial, on which you could place a disk representing a particular trip. The disk had mileage numbers around the perimeter and driving directions printed like spokes on the face. As you progressed down the road, the disk would rotate, telling you where you were and what to do. Live-Map No. 16, for example, guided the "motorist tourist" from Columbus Circle to Waterbury, Connecticut (specifically, the Elton Hotel), telling him, at various intervals, to "take right fork at flag pole," "pass under trolley arch," or "caution for dangerous curves." A promotional booklet for the Jones Live-Map read, "You are always sure of your road. . . . You fly past sign boards at speed without a thought. You never stop to inquire your way. Right or wrong, all chance information is useless to you. You are as easy about your road as though you were 'running on rails.' "

Now that we have been conditioned, by experience or Kerouac, to idealize the open road, it may seem quaint that the dream, in those early days, was to replicate the surrender and effortlessness of train travel, where you didn't have to navigate at all. But, in some respects, the rail ideal persists; we've just got craftier about aspiring to it. Navigation is big business these days. Web sites that offer maps and directions, such as MapQuest and Google Earth, are growing more sophisticated; global-positioning satellite technology and the in-car navigation systems that rely on it, such as General Motors's OnStar and Hertz's NeverLost, are becoming ubiquitous. Geographic Information Systems, or G.I.S., may be the plastics of our time. It's not hard to envision the demise of the paper road map, in a generation or two, because a map, for all its charms, is really a smorgasbord of chance information, most of it useless. Who cares where Buffalo is, if you're trying to get to Cox-

ISTVAN BANYAI



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sackie? Most people just want to be told where to turn.

Both the Photo-Auto Guide and the Jones Live-Map were precise and mechanical attempts to replicate the oldest navigation tool on earth: landmark-based instructions, transmitted verbally or in writing by a person with local knowledge. And this is what the new gadgets aspire to as well, flawed as they can sometimes be. They employ algorithmic calculations that seek to impersonate the friend riding shotgun who knows where he's going, or the bystander who can tell you what you'll see when you've gone too far. Before there were maps, as we understand them, there were itineraries, sequences of customized directions. Maps, to say nothing of the ability to read them, were the stuff of progress. To see and depict the landscape in such abstract terms, as you might from above, requires a measure of sophistication that the mere itinerary, with its blindered view of the world, does not. So it's curious that the current geographic revolution is in many ways a reversion to primitive techniques: it is a high-tech gloss on the lowest-tech approach.

The biggest change, of course, is that the Global Positioning System solves the ancient problem of fixing your location, so that you can devise a way to get to the next one. As the brochure put it a hundred years ago, "The Jones Live-Map tells you just *where you are* and tells you *what to do* then and there. The hand on the rim of the disk always means *Now*." Being told where you are, however, is not the same as knowing where you are.

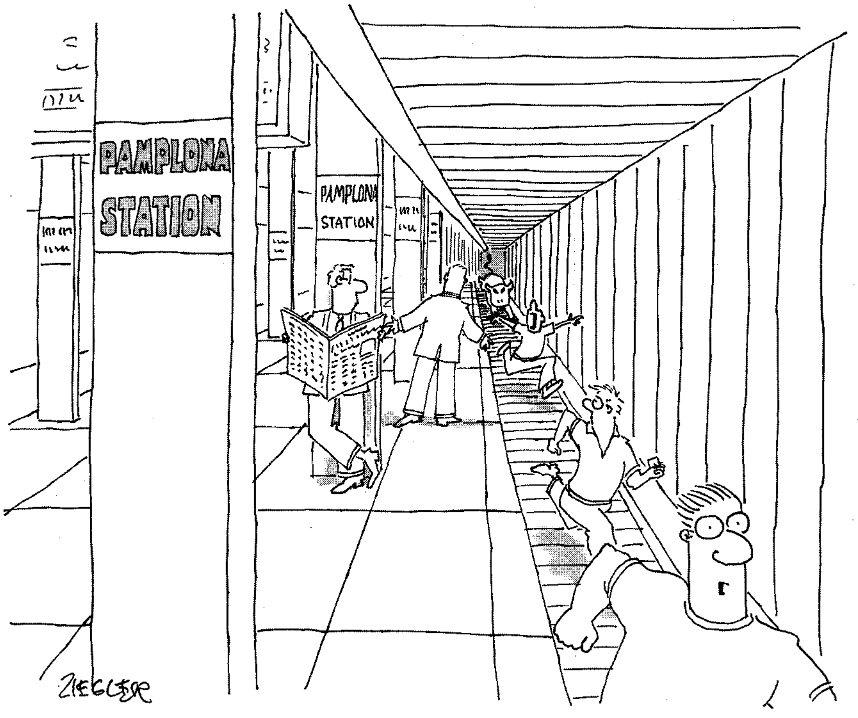
In the fifteenth century, Henry the Navigator, a Portuguese prince, presided over a court in Sagres that became a center for cartographers, instrument-makers, and explorers, whose expeditions he sponsored. Seafarers returning to Sagres from the west coast of Africa reported their discoveries, and new maps were produced, extending the reaches of the known world, which in those days did not go much beyond Cape Verde. These maps became very valuable, owing to their utility in trade, war, and soul-saving, and were jealously guarded as state secrets.

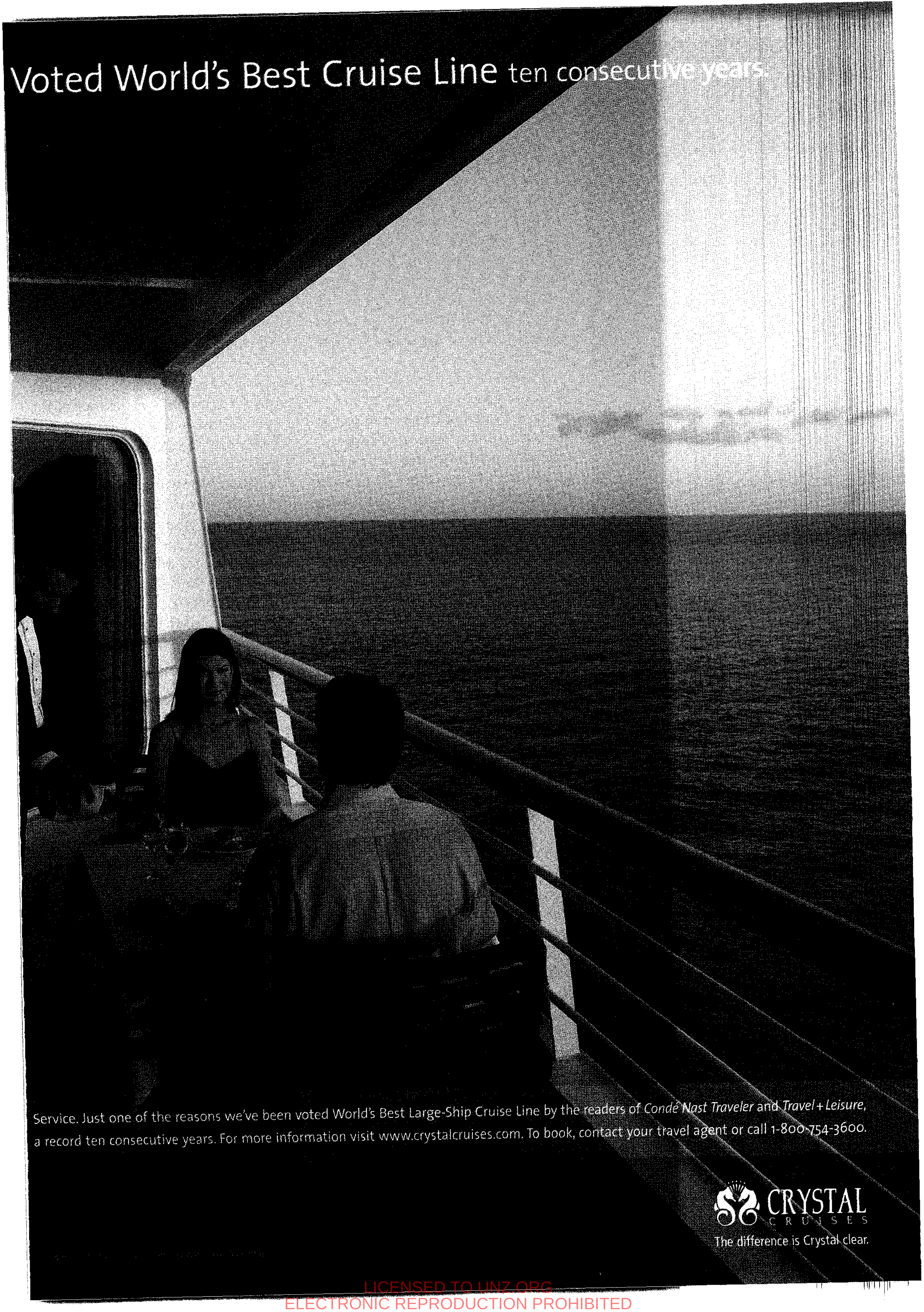
The latter-day equivalent is a company called Navteq. It is the leading provider of geographic data to the Internet mapping sites and the personal-navigation industry—the boiler room of the where-you-are-and-what-to-do business. Its only real competitor is a Belgian company called Tele Atlas. Most of the Web sites, car manufacturers, and gizmo-makers—anyone involved in what are known as intelligent transportation systems—get the bulk of their raw material from these two companies. The clients differ mainly in how they choose to present the data. This allows civilians to have preferences. For example, in the recent "Saturday Night Live" mock-rap video "Lazy Sunday" two guys seeking "the dopest route" from the West Village to the Upper West Side consider using Yahoo! Maps:

> "I prefer MapQuest!"
> "That's a good one, too."
> "Google Maps is the best."
> "True dat."
> "Double true!"

Despite the digitization of maps and the satellites circling the earth, the cartographic revolution still relies heavily on fresh observations made by people. Navteq, like Prince Henry, produces updates periodically (usually four times a year) for its corporate clients. Its explorers are its geographic analysts, whose job is to go onto the roads to make sure everything that it says about those roads is true—to check the old routes and record the new ones. The practice is called ground-truthing. They drive around and take note of what they call "attributes," anything of significance to a traveller seeking his way. A road segment can have a hundred and sixty attributes, everything from a speed limit to a drawbridge, an on-ramp, or a prohibition against U-turns. New signs, new roads, new exits, new rules: if such alterations go uncollected by Navteq, the traveller, relying on a device or a map produced by one of Navteq's clients, might well get lost or confused enough to be "fit for Muldoon's Asylum," as the Jones Live-Map brochure put it, in an early acknowledgment of the anguish of being lost in an automobile. ("It's his for the violent ward, straight and sure.") A driver making a simple left turn—say, from Broadway onto Forty-second Street—encounters a blizzard of attributes: one-way, speed limit, crosswalk, traffic light, street sign, turn restriction, two-way, hydrant.

Navteq has about six hundred field researchers and offices in twenty-three countries. There are nine field researchers in the New York metropolitan area. One morning this fall, I went out with a pair of them, Chris Arcari and Shovie Singh. They picked me up on Forty-second Street, in a white S.U.V., after making that unextraordinary left off Broadway. "We're going to be working





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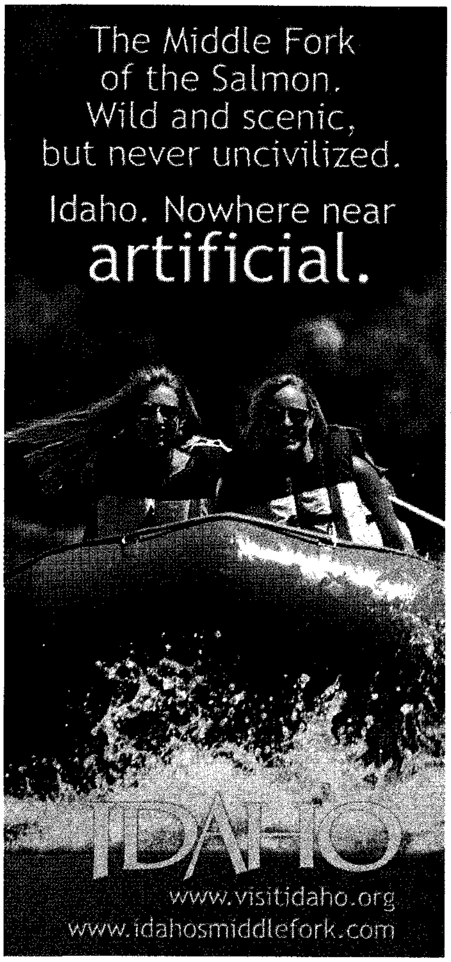
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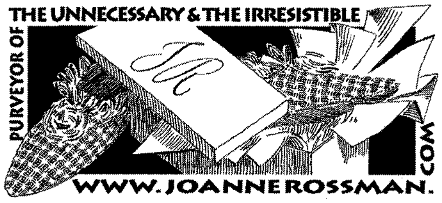
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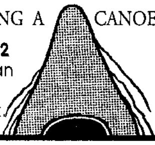
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over by LaGuardia Airport," Arcari said. "One of the items we need to check out is some street names. They've put up new signs. Then we'll proceed to an area that we have targeted." Arcari, who is thirty-seven and was brought up on Long Island, was the senior member of the team, and he tended to speak in the formal, euphemistic manner of a police officer testifying in court. He'd been with Navteq for ten years. Singh, a native of Trinidad who grew up in Queens, was a new hire. He'd got hooked on geography after taking some classes in the subject in college.

They were, you might say, free-driving—no navigation device or map—being not only locals but also professionals in the arcane and endlessly fascinating tri-state-area discipline of getting from here to there. They spend two to three days a week just driving around. Manhattan's grid may be the easiest road network to master in the developed world (if we overlook the nuances), yet the routes leading to and from it are as tricky as the tributaries of the Amazon. (One of the things you notice, as you approach New York City, is that there are almost no signs saying "Manhattan." Instead, the traveller is introduced to such notions as "Mosholu" and "Major Deegan.") The highways are a mad thatch of interstates, parkways, boulevards, and spurs, plus river crossings galore, each with its own virtues and idiosyncrasies. There are many ways to get from point A to point B in New York, and, because of all the permutations, anyone can be a route-selection expert, or at least an enthusiast. Family gatherings inevitably feature a clutch of relatives eating cocktail nuts and arguing over the merits of various exits and shortcuts. So it was that I found myself muttering a bit when Arcari chose to take the Queensboro Bridge and maneuver through the streets of Queens to get to the Long Island Expressway and then the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Clearly, the way to get to LaGuardia, tolls aside, is either (a) the Queens-Midtown Tunnel or (b) the F.D.R. Drive up to the Triborough Bridge. Arcari disagreed. "The F.D.R. Drive can be hit or miss," he said. "At times, in the middle of the day, I have sat there for extended periods." Perhaps, but after merging onto the B.Q.E. we sat there for extended periods as well.

As we inched forward, we began to talk of our favorite and least favorite road segments. Whatever our differences, we agreed that the Cross-Bronx Expressway, a deep, eternally sluggish river of brake lights and diesel exhaust coursing through a waste of twisted rebar and abandoned scrap, is as gruesome a stretch of highway as exists in these parts. Its horrors, however, are invisible to the likes of MapQuest.

Eventually, we pulled into a gas station near the airport. Singh and Arcari mounted a G.P.S. antenna, shaped like a giant mushroom, on the roof of the car, and connected a laptop to it, upon which a map would show our progress, a G.P.S. track "like a birdseed trail." Though we were within rocket-launcher distance of the runways and were assembling some suspicious-looking hardware, no one paid us any mind.

Singh bought a Red Bull and took the wheel. Arcari sat in back with the laptop, ready to note any changes in what they called the "geometry" of the roads.

"Whenever you're ready, Shovie," he said.

The first thing the men noticed was a "No Left Turn" sign out of the gas station. "That doesn't go in the database," Arcari said. "That's unofficial geometry, since it pertains to a private enterprise."

An analyst has some leeway in proposing recon missions in his territory. "The situation at LaGuardia was something I had noticed myself and thought should be revisited," Arcari explained. In his free time, he'd been driving past the airport and, nudged by curiosity, if not conscience, had made a little detour, discovering that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the airport, had put up a few new road signs. This was the situation at LaGuardia.

"We'll circle around the perimeter and then check the terminals," Arcari said. "As we're driving, I'm checking our geometry against what exists in reality." Left on Runway Drive ("drop a name check"), merge onto LaGuardia Road (another name check), left onto Delta Arrivals Road. The sign for it was new. "A valid unnamed feature," Arcari said, turning the laptop so that I could follow along as he recorded it onscreen. "I point an arrow to where the feature occurred." A few hundred yards along, there was another new sign: "East End Rd." Its short-lived existence as mere reality had come to an end; it was geometry now.

Seeing the road through the eyes of a ground-truther made it seem a thicket of signage—commands and designations vying for attention, like a nightmare you might have after a day of studying for a driving exam. Once you start looking for attributes, you spot them everywhere.

"Why don't we loop around again?" Arcari said. "I want to be sure we collected everything correctly."

The familiar frustration of going around and around on an airport road was ameliorated by the fact that no one was lost or late. After the extra orbit, we drove into Astoria, the neighborhood next to the airport. Arcari approached the neighborhood as a Zamboni would a sheet of ice, driving around the outside of the "project area," and then going up and down the streets within it. He observed that, driving around like this, you become acutely aware of how many people are not at work. Arcari said that one of the issues that have come up in New York in recent years is the naming of streets and squares for the victims of the September 11th attacks. We came upon one of them, James Marcel Cartier Way, and Arcari was pleased to see that the name was in the database. A kind of contentment took hold, as other anomalies encountered along the way—an unlikely median strip, a "Do Not Enter" sign—turned out to be accounted for. "This should be a two-way. O.K. Good."

Over lunch at a local diner, we discussed various attribute incidents. "One item that was an issue: on the B.Q.E., they started renumbering the exits. They did some but didn't do others, so for a while there were two Exit 41s."

After lunch, Arcari and Singh were due back at the central office, in Syosset, to download their findings. They offered to drive me back into Manhattan, but we agreed that it would make more sense for me to take the subway. None of us knew where to find it, though. Subway stations are not attributes; Navteq honors the primacy of the automobile, promulgated by the makers of road maps of a century ago, whose mandate was to promote auto travel and, with it, the purchase of gasoline, cars, and tires. We pulled into a gas station, and I ran inside to ask for directions.

A map is a piece of art. It is also a form of language—a rendering of information. A good map can occupy the eye and the mind longer than almost any other single page of data, including Scripture, poetry, sheet music, and baseball box scores. A map contains multitudes.

For the past twenty-five years, scholarly discussion of cartography has been dominated by "critical geography," what you might call a post-structuralist ap-

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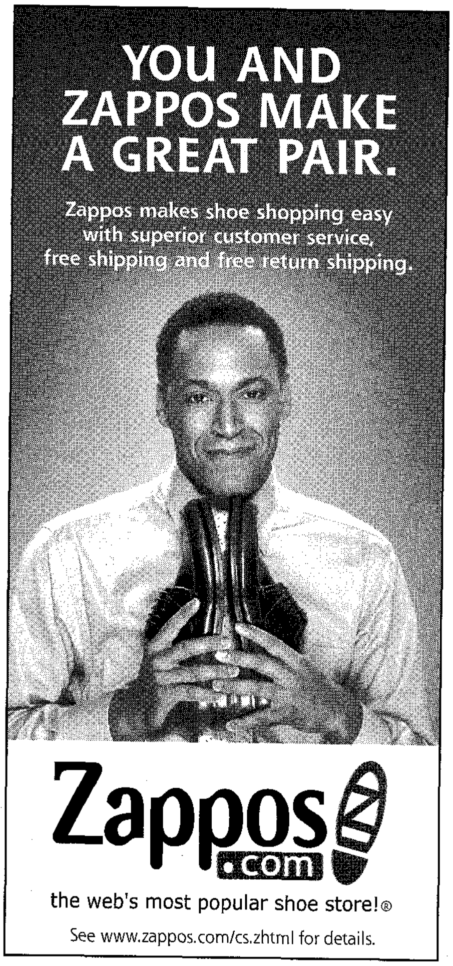

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proach to map reading. Such scholars as J. B. Harley and David Woodward, the late, founding editors of a gargantuan and ongoing project called "The History of Cartography" (Volume 1 was published in 1987; Volume 3 is due out in late 2007), began applying the ideas of Derrida and Foucault to maps, seeing in maps' myriad presentations coded signals about how we look at the world, or, more to the point, how the people who make the maps would like us to see the world.

The purpose and emphasis of a map are usually determined by who is paying for or benefitting from it. Web sites like MapQuest make money in much the same way that road-map publishers always have. They feature banner ads that direct users to fast-food restaurants, hotels, and services. Their maps become tourism-promotion documents. Personal navigation devices have their favored stops and "points of interest," too. As they become more sophisticated, they will come to know your preferences and needs and make suggestions—the nearest Jiffy Lube or Starbucks—turning G.P.S. into a sort of customized, localized Yellow Pages. Harley and Woodward would have been intrigued, though hardly surprised.

The American road map tends to be treated more like folk art. Its leading expert is probably Jim Akerman, the director of the Smith Center for the History of Cartography, at the Newberry Library, in Chicago. "Scratch someone who's interested in the history of cartography and you'll most often find someone who was into road maps as a kid," he told me when I went to visit him at the library recently. He likes to point out that he was born in the same year as the interstate system, 1956. The Newberry has a peerless road-map collection, in a climate-controlled vault—a kind of giant, fantasy glove compartment.

Akerman pulled out boxes of old road maps. Some of the earliest had been made by bicycle enthusiasts; a bike craze in the eighteen-eighties had engendered a movement, led by the League of American Wheelmen, to get the government to put up signs and to improve the muddy, rutted byways that passed for roads. Cyclists had also accumulated their observations of various routes into regional diagrams, which became a critical source for motorists, who, before the government got involved, had to cobble together their own routes. For good maps to exist, there needed to be identifiable roads, with signs. It would do no one any good to have a map in his lap if there were no signs on the road telling him where on that map he might be. Eventually, in 1916, the federal government passed the first of several road-improvement acts. State highway departments were established, and in due time roads were standardized. In 1926, the government established a system of road numbers—odd for those running north-south, even for those running east-west. Soon, gas companies and tire manufacturers began commissioning highway maps, from Rand McNally and others, which they distributed free at service stations.

Akerman also had some old railroad maps. Most railroad maps are essentially graphic itineraries, indicating where you get on and off, drawn not to scale but, rather, to the self-aggrandizing proportions of the rail line in question. They are pretty much useless for navigation. Pointing out that this itinerary model was similar to the one used in the ancient and medieval worlds, he said, "The other fundamental way of navigating is to reach an understanding by trying to grasp the entire territory in question. These are the maps we know. You see not just the single route but the layout of all the routes within the area, with some differentiation in quality. And it is up to the traveller to make choices about which route to take. This kind of map comes into common use in the eighteenth century. It's broadly associated with greater freedom of movement." When you navigate by map, he told me, "you are the one doing the algorithm."

To offer some perspective, he retrieved, from a vault within the vault, one of the library's oldest and most precious maps, a so-called Portolan chart of the Mediterranean, dating to 1456. It showed the sea's entire coastline, with hundreds of ports labelled in the manner of stations on a railroad map, the names neatly lined up parallel to one another, in the order in which one would encounter them if one were sailing along the coast.

"The tension between these two modes of navigating goes back to these maps," he said. "The itinerary represents space as

# HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

## A Cultural Exchange

by Rudy Maxa

ENTER THE PHRASE "FAIRYTALE PRINCIPALITY" in any Internet search engine, and it's no surprise that "Monaco" dominates the listings. There's the Principality's gorgeous setting—a three-mile-long, half-mile-wide sliver of tony real estate between the Mediterranean and the Alps. The Belle Époque architecture of some of its iconic buildings. Its impeccable gardens, magical night life, cultural attractions, and inspired cuisine.

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Monaco and its heart, Monte-Carlo, are indeed charmed places. This year marks the sesquicentennial of the award-winning **Monte-Carlo Philharmonic** (opmc.mc) and the twentieth anniversary of **Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo** (balletsdemontecarlo.com), and the celebration won't simply be a local one. Before heading to the Côte d'Azur, residents and visitors to New York City will want to participate in the fourth annual **Monaco Takes New York**, a series of events highlighting the best of Monaco.

From April 24th through the 28th, eleven New York City restaurants will feature Monégasque dishes, a delicious melding of Italian and French cuisine. Establishments as diverse as Alto, Arabelle, BLT Steak, The Four Seasons, Frederick's Madison, Le Bernardin, L'Impero, Morrell Wine Bar & Café, Payard Bistro, Peacock Alley, and Riingo will participate. Chefs will compete to create the most memorable version of *barbagiuan*, a specialty appetizer of Monaco that combines spinach, swiss chard, leeks, and cheese. Diners who vote for their favorite rendition of the dish will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win round-trip tickets to the Principality on Delta Air Lines, as well as a three-night stay at the Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort.

On May 13th, New York's classical radio station 96.3 WQXR-FM will air the grand finale of the 2006 **Making Music in Monaco** program, a three-hour special celebrating the anniversaries of the Philharmonic and Les Ballets, and the reopening of the Salle Garnier (home of the Monte-Carlo Opera) with musical selections from each of the venues. The broadcast will include symphonic works from Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev, live operatic performances of "Don Quixote" and "The Barber of Seville," and other orchestral offerings and special features.

Through July 22nd, the Forbes Galleries in Greenwich Village are presenting a free National Jewelry Institute-curated exhibition, **Treasures of the Titans: 1950–Present** (forbesgalleries.com). Baubles and collectibles such as a diamond-studded brooch, pocket watches, cuff links, and a Fabergé egg perfume flacon owned by style-setters such as Elton John, Elizabeth Taylor, Jackie Onassis, and John F. Kennedy are on display. From Monaco, Prince Rainier III's personal desk set as well as jewelry worn by Princess Grace are being featured, including a gold, diamond, and ruby Scorpio pendant; diamond and platinum tiara; gold and ruby Vacheron Constantin watch; and Van Cleef & Arpels earrings.

A memento of the royal nuptials fifty years ago, the rose-point lace, silk faille and tulle wedding dress Princess Grace wore that day, is the focus of an exhibition at the **Philadelphia Museum of Art** (philamuseum.org) through May 21st.

Walk the narrow, cobblestone pavements of Monaco's old town and you feel the history of the place. On streets that radiate from the **Princely Palace** (palais.mc), restaurateurs set tables outside for lunch and dinner. The colorful changing of the palace guard occurs every day just before noon. Nearby, set on an imposing rock cliff overlooking the Mediterranean, the impressive **Oceanographic Museum** (oceano.mc) features the work of its former director Jacques Cousteau and one of the best collections of marine life in the world.

Elsewhere in the Principality, the landmark **Monte-Carlo Opera House**, designed by the famed nineteenth-century architect Charles Garnier, reopened recently after two years of careful restoration. More than thirty specialized companies worked to perfect every detail of the building—from the exterior's stone façade and dome (which rests on a metallic frame by Gustave Eiffel) to the interior's chandelier, frescos, paintings, and gold-leaf moldings.

*COVER IMAGE:* © STEWART FEREBEE; *THIS PAGE, TOP:* © STEWART FEREBEE; LOUIS XIV STATUE AT HOTEL DE PARIS © MGTO; PRINCE RAINIER & PRINCESS GRACE © THE PRINCELY PALACE

**For more information, go to VisitMonaco.com and MonacoTakesNewYork.com**

It is the only opera house in the world with exterior views (in this case, of the Mediterranean) from within the concert space.

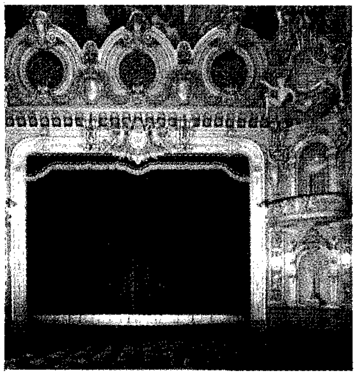
And for the first time in seventy-five years, a new hotel, the **Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort** (montecarlobay.com), opened here. Each of its 334 rooms has a private terrace that resembles a summer sitting room. A spa, indoor/outdoor pool, and two dining rooms are also on the premises. The **Port Palace** hotel (portpalace.com), on the quay side of the harbor, is Monaco's first boutique hotel, with fifty guest rooms finished in the finest fabrics, leathers, and Carrara marble.

**Le Meridien Beach Plaza** (montecarlo.lemeridien.com) added two striking glass towers with sweeping views of the sea, and the **Hôtel Métropole Monte-Carlo** (metropole.com), recently completed a multi-million-dollar renovation under the guidance of Jacques Garcia. Its new spa, Métropole ESPA Monte-Carlo, is poised to open shortly, and the hotel's signature restaurant was conceptualized by and named after Master Chef Joël Robuchon. Monaco's largest hotel, the landmark **Fairmont Monte Carlo** (fairmont.com/montecarlo)—with 619 rooms, rooftop pool, and modern casino—marked its thirtieth anniversary recently by announcing an extensive fifty-million-dollar refurbishment. The **Hôtel Mirabeau** (montecarloresort.com) received a makeover and now has rooms whose balconies offer sweeping views of the Mediterranean Sea. A Japanese garden in its courtyard can be crossed via a glass tunnel that leads to the bar as well as the restaurant, **La Coupole**—recent recipient of a one-star honor from the *Michelin Guide*.

Of course, Alain Ducasse's culinary cathedral, **Le Louis XV** (montecarloresort.com) in the Hôtel de Paris, retains its three Michelin stars, and in pleasant weather, a lunch on the terrace can easily last three hours—if you do it right. You'll have a bird's-eye view of the comings and goings at Monaco's most famous hotel. And car aficionados can keep track of the Bentleys and sporty Italian roadsters that circle the fountain in front of the casino just across the street.

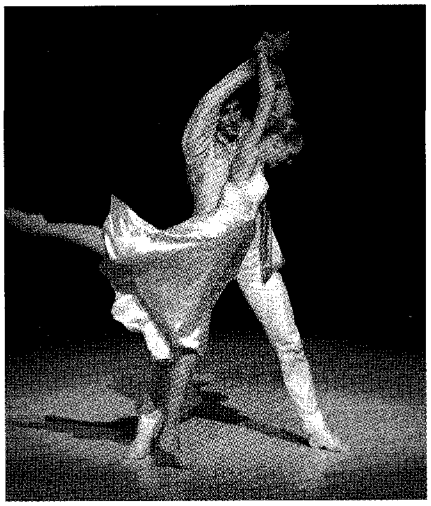
When you're not dining, gambling, visiting museums, playing tennis or golf, or relaxing in a spa or on the beach, you might want to take in a little art from . . . New York. A groundbreaking collection of American contemporary art will be on display at the Espace Ravel at Monaco's **Grimaldi Forum** (grimaldiforum.com) from July 14th through September 10th.

Seminal works of painting, sculpture, architecture, video, photography, performance, cinema, and music will offer a look at one of the most important art movements from the nineteen-forties to the nineteen-nineties. Among the artists represented will be Jackson Pollock, Roy Lichtenstein, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Philip Johnson, Diane Arbus, Woody Allen, Sol LeWitt, Cindy Sherman, and Jeff Koons. "The show will highlight a pivotal period of postwar and contemporary art, when New York dominated the international scene," says Lisa Dennison, co-curator with Germano Celant of the "New York, New York" exhibit.



And so, in a cultural collaboration of hands across the sea, Monaco and the United States exchange treasures this spring and summer. The best part about it? **You're invited!**

*(Rudy Maxa is host and co-executive producer of a public television series of travel shows on Europe and the Pacific Rim.)*



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**MAY 9** Delta Air Lines (delta.com) inaugurates nonstop service between Atlanta and Nice, the closest international airport to Monaco. Delta also offers nonstop flights between New York's JFK airport and Nice.

**MAY 20–21** Historic Grand Prix: A retrospective of the golden age of racing (acm.mc).

**MAY 25–28** Formula 1 Grand Prix. The streets of Monte-Carlo become the focus of sports-car fans around the world (acm.mc).

**JULY 10** Monte-Carlo International Fireworks Festival. International pyrotechnic specialists attempt to outdo one another. (Other dates: July 27, August 7, August 24. Great viewing from various venues in the Principality.)

**JULY 14–SEPTEMBER 10** "New York, New York" exhibition. A look at the arts scene in New York City from the forties to the nineties (grimaldiforum.com).

**JULY 16** Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra's summer concerts in the courtyard of the Princely Palace begin. A salute to Beethoven featuring New York-based pianist Emmanuel Ax to be held on August 6 (opmc.mc).

**JULY 25–30** The musical "Grease" to be staged at the Grimaldi Forum (grimaldiforum.com).

**JULY 30** Première of Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo's "Les Nuits de la Danse," co-choreographed by New York's William Forsythe. Additional performances: August 2, 4, 5, 8–10, 12–13 (balletsdemontecarlo.com).

**SEPTEMBER 20–23** Monaco Yacht Show. Nearly a hundred world-class yachts go on display in Monaco's Port Hercules (monacoyachtshow.com).

THE PRINCIPALITY OF

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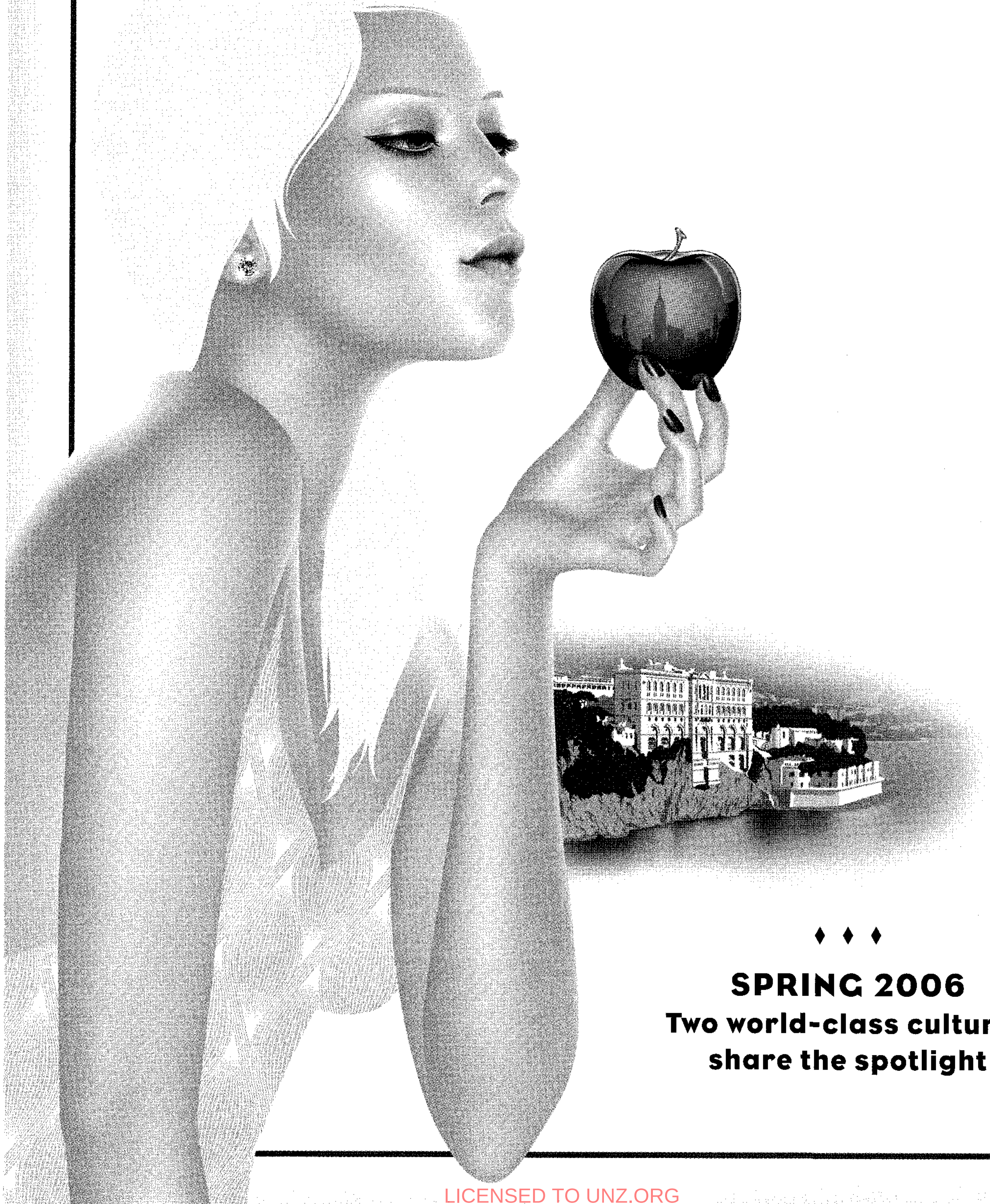
## TAKES NEW YORK



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### SPRING 2006

Two world-class cultures
share the spotlight

## TO THE REPUBLIC

I dreamt I saw a caravan of the dead
start out again from Gettysburg.

Close-packed upright in rows on railcar flat-
beds in the sun, they soon will stink.

Victor and vanquished shoved together, dirt
had bleached the blue and gray one color.

Risen again from Gettysburg, as if
the state were shelter crawled to through

blood, risen disconsolate that we
now ruin the great work of time,

they roll in outrage across America.

*You betray us* is blazoned across each chest.
To each eye as they pass: *You betray us.*

Assaulted by the impotent dead, I say it's
their misfortune and none of my own.

I dreamt I saw a caravan of the dead
move on wheels touching rails without sound.

To each eye as they pass: *You betray us.*

—*Frank Bidart*

one experiences it on the ground. A map like this has that element, but it starts to introduce the notion that you can conceive of it as a larger unit. It's a God's-eye view, which puts you in charge of navigating through space. This is the origin of the notion that you can pull yourself away from the world and see it from above."

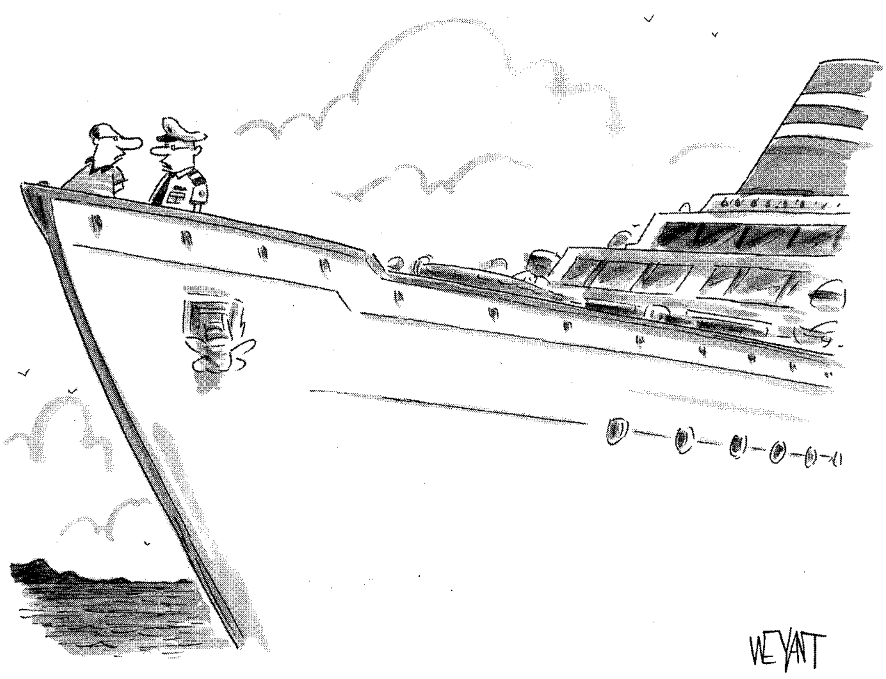
The irony is that centuries later, when we have perfected the God's-eye map and become conversant with it, we have, in the thrall of technology, turned back to the ancient way: the itinerary and the strip map. OnStar and MapQuest zero in on the information that's relevant to reaching your destination. "They close down your choices and give you a route," Akerman said.

It can be amusing to see what MapQuest and its ilk come up with. They don't always work. For example, I recently looked to see how MapQuest would get me from East Ninety-sixth Street in Manhattan to the North Shore of Long Island, an hour-long trip that I and countless other drivers have honed (with variations for personal preference, traffic avoidance, and monotony-breakage) over the years. Triborough Bridge to the Grand Central Parkway to the Whitestone Expressway to the Cross Island Parkway to the Long Island Expressway. Bing-bang-boom. MapQuest had an unprecedented suggestion: take the Triborough Bridge to the Bruckner Expressway and then to the Throgs Neck Bridge. From the Upper West Side, a few traffic lights west, MapQuest, snickering, guides you to the Cross Bronx Expressway and then to the Throgs Neck. *The Cross Bronx*? It would seem that the algorithms are new to the area. These directions involve a disconcerting degree of noncontiguousness. Why cross a body of water at its widest possible point? Why even mess with the Bronx? You may as well stick a sandwich in your ear before putting it into your mouth.

Generally, MapQuest and OnStar choose a road based on their calculations of which will get you there fastest. The criterion is time, a function both of speed and of distance. They do not, as some people suspect, simply pick the shortest route; otherwise, you might spend all your time on side streets, stuck at traffic lights or goat crossings. The algorithms consider the length of a road segment and the expected speed of the road and calculate the time it will take you to pass along it. Every road segment has a "costing," a sum of the features that can slow a driver down. Turns, merges, exits, toll plazas, stoplights, speed zones: they all carry a cost. (Navteq has five "functional classes" of road, ranked according to connectivity and speed. An interstate highway is a one; a local street is a five.) These systems do not yet take into consideration traffic, construction, weather, time of day, or one's tendency, on certain roads, to go faster than the speed limit.

There are features that we associate with maps or navigation which have little bearing on the kind of road directions favored by MapQuest and OnStar. Traditional visual landmarks—flagpole, river bend, stone church—are hardly recognized. And a road that traverses water (i.e., a bridge) is no different from one that cuts through a golf course or a drug-free school zone if the speed limit is the same. This is why the Throgs Neck looks more reasonable to an algorithm, even if to a driver that extra water crossing may mean another toll and greater potential for bottleneck traffic.

With MapQuest, you can either look at a map, presented in a manner that makes your route the center of the world, or you can get an itinerary. But, since MapQuest's directions are derived from looking at a route on a map, the advice it gives is based mostly on map reality, not driver reality. Traditionally, verbal directions capture the experience of driving on the road, much as the McNally Photo-Auto Guide did; MapQuest captures that of plotting the route, from a God's-eye view. This is why, for instance, MapQuest will identify a short stretch of road—an off-ramp, a connector—that to the traveller would normally be negligible (without



*"Is everything O.K., sir? We noticed that you aren't constantly eating."*

• •

mentioning that you should keep the river or the graveyard on your right). Whether a segment is 0.1 or two thousand miles long, it is given equal billing. This sometimes has a ludicrous effect. For example, Google's directions for leaving Spokane, Washington: "Head north from N. Lincoln St., go 33 feet. Turn left at W. Main Ave., go 0.1 mi. Turn left at W. Spokane Falls Blvd., go 127 feet." Certainly, once someone following this kind of itinerary loses his way he has no idea where he is, because he has no sense of how the directions he's following fit into the larger picture.

Most navigation devices in cars display your route on a small dashboard screen; the settings can be altered, but more often than not the top of the display represents the direction in which you are moving. The onscreen map, in other words, is not oriented north-south, like a paper map. The map constantly readjusts itself, so that the road ahead is up. This is a boon to people who may be disinclined to see the ground in terms of north-south—people who when standing on a street corner will hold a paper map and turn it so that what is in front of them on the ground is also in front of them (above them) on the map. As to the age-old and oft-debated question of whether women are more apt to do this than men—of whether geographic proficiency correlates to one gender or the other—there is a great deal of straight-faced academic research. Suffice it to say that the scholarship is inconclusive, though it does tend to find that men and women, whether by nature or by nurture, perceive space differently.

At any rate, the in-car map displays generally represent small swatches of land, your immediate surroundings. You can zoom in and zoom out, but the area you're passing through is a disembodied square, free of the context of the larger landmass. For example, as you pass along the Bruckner, on your way to the Throgs Neck, you see a web of lines, and words like "Port Morris" and "Hunts Point." What you tend not to see is where the Bruckner and the Bronx fit into the bigger picture—the Bronx poised like a catcher's mitt between the legs of Manhattan and Long Island, the southernmost wedge of New York State mainland breaking up into an archipelago. You do not see, in other words, how taking the Throgs Neck might appear, on a standard map, to be a detour.

In the spirit of fair-mindedness, I tried this route one Saturday morning, when there would likely be little traffic to corrupt the results of the experiment. The affront to both habit and the inner compass—every fibre crying out, "Turn east, east!"—was especially acute as, per MapQuest, I followed signs directing me to New England, instead of to Long Island. So was the unpleasant prospect of paying the additional toll of four-fifty that the Throgs Neck would require: a deal-breaker, especially if you're one of those people who plot routes primarily on the basis of toll avoidance. (You know the type: he loves the Macombs Dam Bridge.) Still, I stayed with it. The road was clear and fast, the prospect—Rikers Island, from the north!—refreshing. As the Throgs Neck Bridge conveyed me onto Long Island, and I rejoined the usual route, on the Cross Island Parkway, I noted, on the digital clock on the dash, that I'd made great time. Perhaps this way was a minute or two longer. Hardly more. Over the years, those minutes, not to mention the toll payments, could add up, but still: MapQuest's algorithms had apparently opened an iconoclastic alternate route, a Long Island commuter's Northwest Passage.

Chicago, you might say, is the Sagres of the American imperium, a hub of geographic and cartographic expertise. This is due mainly to Chicago's role, in the nineteenth century, as a major railroad center. Rand McNally ("to maps what Jell-O is to gelatine," as Akerman said) was based there (it is now just up the pike, in Skokie), as were many other prominent map publishers. The University of Chicago had, until recently, one of the best geography departments, and is still a leading publisher of scholarly books on geography and cartography.

Navteq (the name is a contraction of Navigation Technologies) started life in 1985, in Silicon Valley, and moved to Chicago in 1997. Its revenues have tripled since 2002, amid the digital mapping boom. It occupies an ever-expanding suite of offices on an immense floor of the Merchandise Mart, one of the largest commercial buildings in the world. It would be wise, when visiting Navteq, to bring bread crumbs or a handheld G.P.S. to keep from getting lost. One morning this fall, in a confer-

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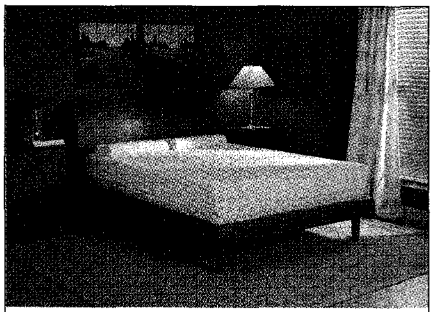

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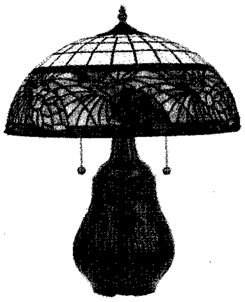

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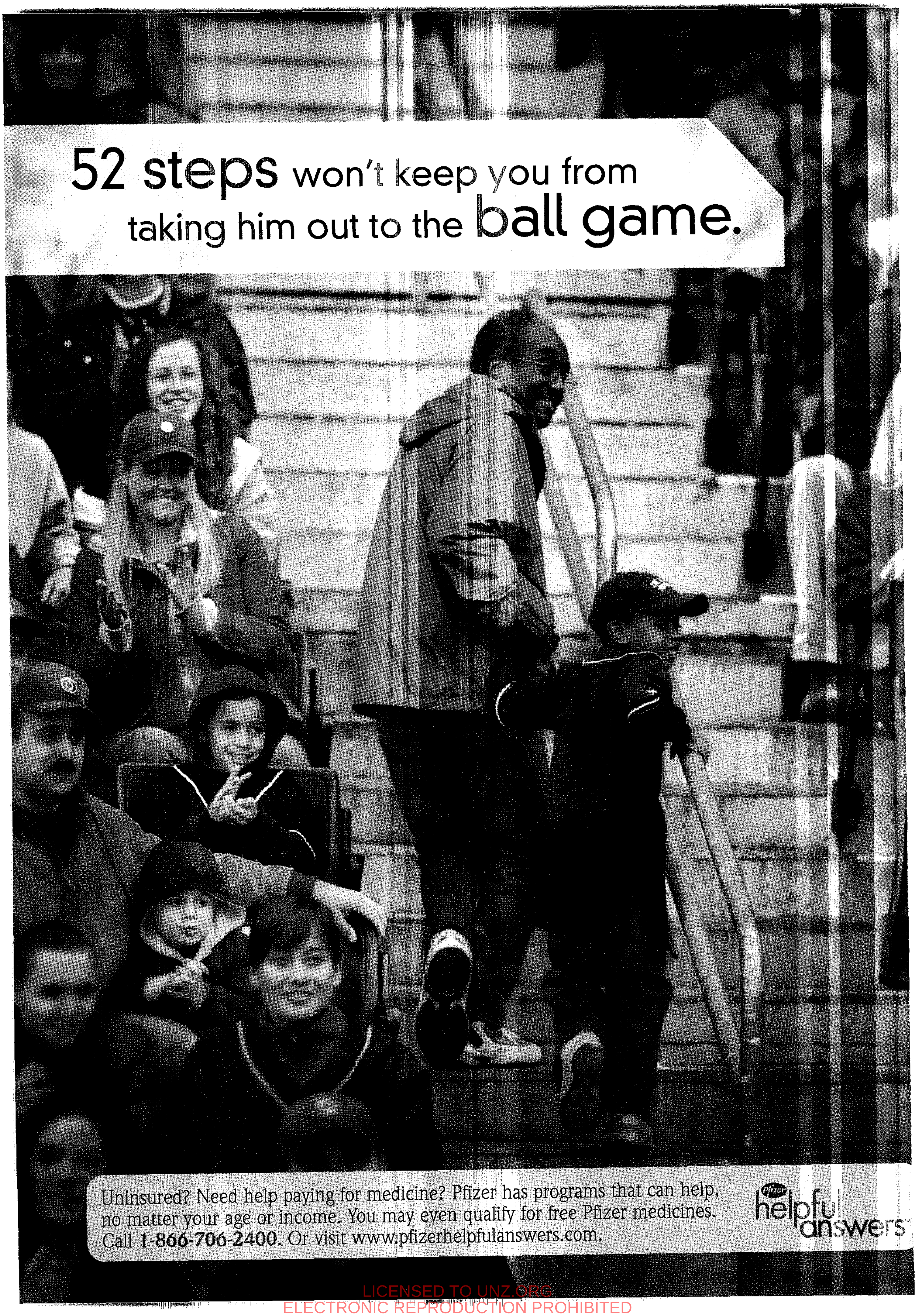
52 steps won't keep you from taking him out to the ball game.
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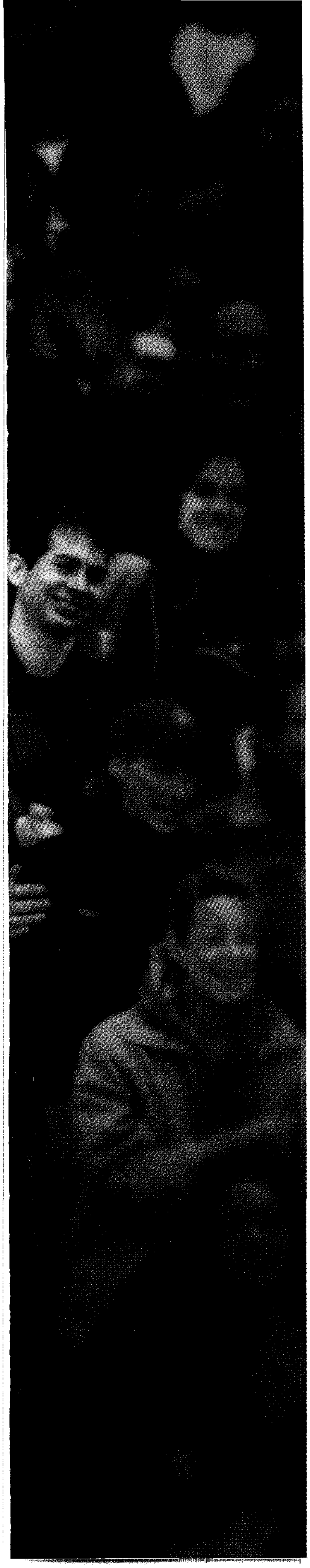

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CELEBREX is one of the most studied arthritis medicines on the market. But you should know that CELEBREX, like all medicines, has both risks and benefits. It's important to talk to your doctor about treatment options to find out which one is right for you. Your doctor may also recommend other kinds of treatments.

**Important Information: CELEBREX may increase the chance of a heart attack or stroke that can lead to death. It should not be used right before or after certain heart surgeries.**
**Serious skin reactions or stomach and intestine problems such as bleeding and ulcers can occur without warning and may cause death.**

Patients taking aspirin and the elderly are at increased risk for stomach bleeding and ulcers.

Tell your doctor if you:

- Are pregnant
- Have a history of ulcers or bleeding in the stomach or intestines
- Have high blood pressure or heart failure
- Have kidney or liver problems

People with aspirin-sensitive asthma or allergic reactions due to aspirin or other arthritis medicines or certain drugs called sulfonamides should not take CELEBREX.

Prescription CELEBREX should be used exactly as prescribed at the lowest dose possible and for the shortest time needed.

For more information, call 1-888-CELEBREX (1-888-235-3273) or visit www.CELEBREX.com

*Please see important information about CELEBREX and other NSAIDs on next page.*

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**CELEBREX®**
(celecoxib capsules)

## Medication Guide
## for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

(See the end of this Medication Guide for a list of prescription NSAID medicines.)

---

**What is the most important information I should know about medicines called Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?**

**NSAID medicines may increase the chance of a heart attack or stroke that can lead to death.**

This chance increases:

- with longer use of NSAID medicines
- in people who have heart disease

**NSAID medicines should never be used right before or after a heart surgery called a "coronary artery bypass graft (CABG)."**

**NSAID medicines can cause ulcers and bleeding in the stomach and intestines at any time during treatment. Ulcers and bleeding:**

- can happen without warning symptoms
- may cause death

**The chance of a person getting an ulcer or bleeding increases with:**

- taking medicines called "corticosteroids" and "anticoagulants"
- longer use
- smoking
- drinking alcohol
- older age
- having poor health

**NSAID medicines should only be used:**

- exactly as prescribed
- at the lowest dose possible for your treatment
- for the shortest time needed

---

**What are Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?**

NSAID medicines are used to treat pain and redness, swelling, and heat (inflammation) from medical conditions such as:

- different types of arthritis
- menstrual cramps and other types of short-term pain

**Who should not take a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID)?**

**Do not take an NSAID medicine:**

- if you had an asthma attack, hives, or other allergic reaction with aspirin or any other NSAID medicine
- for pain right before or after heart bypass surgery

**Tell your healthcare provider:**

- about all of your medical conditions.
- about all of the medicines you take. NSAIDs and some other medicines can interact with each other and cause serious side effects. **Keep a list of your medicines to show to your health care provider and pharmacist.**
- if you are pregnant. **NSAID medicines should not be used by pregnant women late in their pregnancy.**
- if you are breastfeeding. **Talk to your doctor.**

**What are the possible side effects of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?**

**Serious side effects include:**

- heart attack
- stroke
- high blood pressure
- heart failure from body swelling (fluid retention)
- kidney problems including kidney failure
- bleeding and ulcers in the stomach and intestine
- low red blood cells (anemia)
- life-threatening skin reactions
- life-threatening allergic reactions
- liver problems including liver failure
- asthma attacks in people who have asthma

**Other side effects include:**

- stomach pain
- constipation
- diarrhea
- gas
- heartburn
- nausea
- vomiting
- dizziness

**Get emergency help right away if you have any of the following symptoms:**

- shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- chest pain
- weakness in one part or side of your body
- slurred speech
- swelling of the face or throat

**Stop your NSAID medicine and call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms:**

- nausea
- more tired or weaker than usual
- itching
- your skin or eyes look yellow
- stomach pain
- flu-like symptoms
- vomit blood
- there is blood in your bowel movement or it is black and sticky like tar
- skin rash or blisters with fever
- unusual weight gain
- swelling of the arms and legs, hands and feet

These are not all the side effects with NSAID medicines. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information about NSAID medicines.

**Other information about Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)**

- Aspirin is an NSAID medicine but it does not increase the chance of a heart attack. Aspirin can cause bleeding in the brain, stomach, and intestines. Aspirin can also cause ulcers in the stomach and intestines.
- Some of these NSAID medicines are sold in lower doses without a prescription (over-the-counter). Talk to your healthcare provider before using over-the-counter NSAIDs for more than 10 days.

**NSAID medicines that need a prescription**

| Generic Name | Tradename |
|---|---|
| Celecoxib | Celebrex |
| Diclofenac | Cataflam, Voltaren, Arthrotec (combined with misoprostol) |
| Diflunisal | Dolobid |
| Etodolac | Lodine, Lodine XL |
| Fenoprofen | Nalfon, Nalfon 200 |
| Flurbiprofen | Ansaid |
| Ibuprofen | Motrin, Tab-Profen, Vicoprofen (combined with hydrocodone), Combunox (combined with oxycodone) |
| Indomethacin | Indocin, Indocin SR, Indo-Lemmon, Indomethagan |
| Ketoprofen | Oruvail |
| Ketorolac | Toradol |
| Mefenamic Acid | Ponstel |
| Meloxicam | Mobic |
| Nabumetone | Relafen |
| Naproxen | Naprosyn, Anaprox, Anaprox DS, EC-Naproxyn, Naprelan, Naprapac (copackaged with lansoprazole) |
| Oxaprozin | Daypro |
| Piroxicam | Feldene |
| Sulindac | Clinoril |
| Tolmetin | Tolectin, Tolectin DS, Tolectin 600 |

*This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.*

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ence room I'm sure I could never find again, I met Judson Green, the company's C.E.O., and Salahuddin Khan, a senior vice-president, who supervises the complicated task of converting raw data, including the observations of analysts like Arcari and Singh, into lefts and rights. Navteq is as much a collator of information as a collector of it. The raw information comes from a variety of sources, including the government—for example, from what are known as TIGER files, prepared by the Census Bureau. This information is in the public domain. A lot of it is out of date, idiosyncratic, incompatible, and, at the very least, requires cleaning up. Digital aerial photography is used as well.

The existing data, from the government and other sources, had not been collected with way-finding in mind, so it was necessary to look at the world again through the eyes of a driver, instead of those of a tax collector or a land surveyor—"to add all the attributes no one ever thought to add because they weren't thinking of navigation in the first place," Khan said. "Guidance, one-way systems, no left turns. Does something go under or over when you have two lines that cross a map?"

Khan, who was born in Pakistan, is placid and precise, with a neatly trimmed beard and a slight burr, a vestige of more than three decades in Britain. He happened to be heading out himself the following day to do a little ground-truthing in Wyoming.

"It's like news reporting," Khan said. "You could not do it all from Washington. You need to have stations and field offices in order to get that local knowledge."

Khan has three cars and a single-engine plane; being a pilot (and, by training, an aeronautical engineer) got him interested, years ago, in moving maps, in which the map centers on your present location—a kind of predecessor to the devices employed in cars these days. He began using navigational systems well before he came to Navteq, in 1998, and finds it strange that in this day and age someone would have a road atlas in the car. "Maybe that's a guy thing," he said. He is a self-professed "map nut," but really more of a gearhead. "Historically, I had what I would call 'lost anxiety'—anxiety about being lost," he said. "I then got to experience navigation systems. And I feel that I have effectively diluted lost anxiety out of my system. In other words, I've been conditioned not to be anxious when lost, even when I am in a vehicle that does not have a navigation system."

As he calmly summoned a world in which technology would do away with the experience of going astray, I began reassessing, in the rearview mirror of my mind, all the times I'd been lost or confused, angry at the map or the person next to me who couldn't make sense of it. Panic in a New Jersey rotary; despair in the pitch black of the Poconos at night; the shame, after you've got on the wrong highway, of hurtling past a sign saying "NEXT EXIT 13 MILES." All the rash U-turns and frantic attempts to get the attention of the driver in the next car—you give him the now quaint but still widely recognized "roll down your window" signal and shout helplessly across the gulf, "Where can I find Route 17?" Yours for the violent ward, straight and sure. For the first time, I began to think that one of those devices might not be such a bad idea. Even map nuts get lost.

What Khan was describing was a process of refinement. Over time, as the systems grow more sophisticated, the digital maps will come to look more and more like the world as it's perceived through the windshield of an automobile. Bodies of water, for example, are often given short shrift, because one cannot drive on them. Navteq takes note of "water polygons," as they're called, mainly because people are accustomed to seeing them on their maps. "Maps look very strange if they don't contain those things," Khan said. "There's an almost paradigmatic expectation on the part of consumers to see maps that look like maps." It will be interesting to see how long this expectation survives. As Green told me, Navteq is "revolutionizing the way people think about and interact with maps." He went on, "This technology is going to be pervasive. One thing we're talking about is potentially having digital maps inform the operation of the car. If you put a digital map in the engine of a car, you may have headlights turning in anticipation of the curvature of the road." He mentioned other G.P.S. applications. "A mobile consumer can get all kinds of questions answered," he said. "Where are my buddies? Where's my

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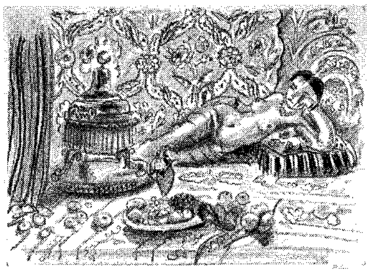

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family? Where are my kids? Where can I find a barbecue grill within ten miles for less than four hundred dollars?"

After talking to Green and Khan, I was taken down a series of corridors to something called the Dynamic Content Operations Center, an embryonic attempt to provide up-to-the-minute traffic information. Two technicians sat before a dozen screens on which were displayed city traffic maps, with little icons indicating accidents and construction projects. Navteq gets the data, which it transmits to XM Radio, from local outfits. For now, Navteq keeps track of the traffic in twenty-two cities. Certainly, this system is an improvement on such blunt instruments as the periodic updates on AM radio, which seem always to report traffic on routes that do not pertain to your own—a reassuring absence of news, until you hit the afore-unmentioned jam. The Navteq method is more like having a friend or a family member you can call who spends all day watching the traffic cams on cable television, and not everyone has one of these.

The dream, in the navigation business, is that it will soon be possible to transmit real-time traffic information. The same technology that enables drivers to know where they are can, theoretically, be used to tell everyone else where they are and how fast they're going. An aggregate of that information will make it possible for a driver to know, instantaneously, how fast traffic is moving along the various road segments that he intends to take. Traffic will become, in essence, an efficient market.

The technicians showed me New York. I noted that traffic on the Throgs Neck was moving well but that there was an accident nearby, on the southbound side of I-678, on the approach to the Bronx Whitestone Bridge. There was something about having access to this information in Chicago that brought on a faint but pleasing kind of homesickness. Ah, yes, the Whitestone. I tried to think of someone I knew to whom this information would be useful.

While I was in Chicago, I went to see Kenneth Nebenzahl, a prominent dealer in rare books and old maps and the author of five books on the history of cartography. He lives in Glencoe, half an hour north of downtown Chicago. I went by taxi. The driver had no idea how to get there, and she had a fluid, if spirited, view of geography (she insisted, for example, that the Arabian Peninsula is part of Africa), so I got Nebenzahl to give me directions over the phone: "Take Lake Shore to Sheridan . . . go through ravine . . . do not cross railroad tracks . . . and if these directions are no good we'll call in the Glencoe Marines." I also had printouts of the area from MapQuest (which suggested taking the interstate), but they were hard to square with Nebenzahl's route. We wound our way along the North Shore. After the ravine, we got jumpy, made a premature turn, then tried to wing it, and soon found ourselves at a dead end. We put in a call to the Marines.

Nebenzahl is seventy-eight, a native of Long Island who dropped out of high school to enlist in the Marines in the hope of catching some combat in the closing days of the Second World War. (To his great distress and lasting benefit, he was deployed to the Caribbean, instead of to the Pacific.) As a child, he was obsessed with maps: when he was nine, he assembled a road atlas of his own by binding together, with tape, his collection of forty-eight service-station state maps.

He led me up to his study and began taking books and journals from the shelves: maps through the ages, a dizzying chronicle of ignorance and discovery. He showed me an image of what he considered to be the world's first road map, the Peutinger Tabula, a manuscript copy of an old Roman chart depicting the routes leading to Rome—an illustrated itinerary, really. He also had plates from the "Chronica Majora" of Matthew Paris, a collection of thirteenth-century maps of the journey from London to the Holy Land. They resembled pages from an A.A.A. TripTik, with little views of the towns and descriptions of distances.

Along the continuum of modern geography scholarship, Nebenzahl is a little old-fashioned; to him the maps themselves, and not just the information they convey, are worthy of study. He views the rise of digital mapping with a mixture of incomprehension, condescension, and sorrow, as a Brill Building songwriter might regard digital sampling.

"Geographers now hate maps," Nebenzahl said. "If you only give people a six-by-six-inch screen, how can they get a sense of where they are, or where they fit in? We're pushing the next generation into geographic illiteracy by not giving them a sense of what world geography is."

It was getting late, and Nebenzahl had to leave for a meeting of the Chicago Map Society at the Newberry Library. Ralph Ehrenberg, the former chief of geography and the map division at the Library of Congress, was giving a talk about Lewis and Clark and the map they'd made of their journey, a surprisingly accurate rendering of a large swath of the West, based mostly, as Salahuddin Khan might say, on nothing. Lewis and Clark relied on an array of methods and tools—a log line reel, compasses, watches, an octant, a sextant, a chronometer, a surveyor's chain, and Native American sketches of the terrain—and then sent readings back East, to be drafted by a cartographer in Philadelphia named Nicholas King. I imagined Chris Arcari and Shovie Singh, their white S.U.V. stuck in the mud at the foot of the Bitterroot Range: some serious geometry, a valid unnamed feature.

Nebenzahl offered to drive me back into the city. The car was new, but there was no navigation device. "I didn't want one of those damn things on the dashboard," he said. Before we pulled out of his garage, he listened to a traffic report on the radio, thought for a moment, and decided to take the lakeshore route—it was more scenic, certainly, in the twilight of a crisp late-autumn day. We wound our way through college campuses and elegant neighborhoods, admiring the attributes. Near the city limits, though, we ran into a jam. Nebenzahl sighed and said, "I should've known." We sat there for an extended period, as Chicago sparkled in the distance. ♦

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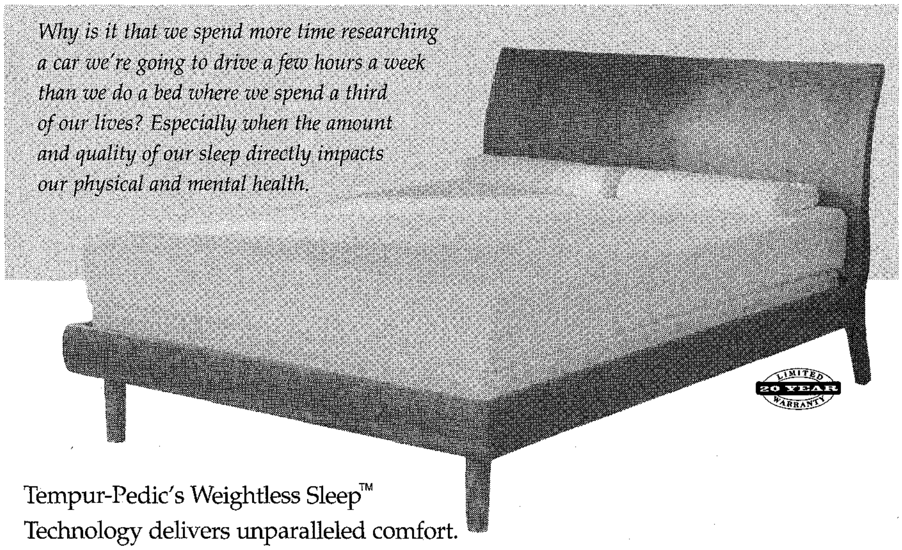
*From the Times.*

Because of a transcription error, an article last Sunday in Summer Movies, Part 2 of this section, about the director Don Roos rendered a word incorrectly in his comment about the use of onscreen titles in his film "Happy Endings." He said, "I love foreign films, which have a lot of signage in them"—not "porno films."

*Which have less signage.*



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# In the Wild

ONCE THE EXCLUSIVE DOMAIN of maharajas, viceroys, and their retinues, India's hunting grounds have been transformed into wildlife conservation areas.

Today, India maintains some 450 national parks and sanctuaries sheltering 350 mammal and 2,000 bird species, many unique to the subcontinent. Visitors can observe these exotic creatures in dramatic landscapes stretching from the Thar Desert to the foothills of the Himalayas.

## SAVING THE TIGER

Conservationists have worked for decades to preserve and protect India's Bengal tigers, which are found in the wild only in Asia. Project Tiger, a government conservation program launched in 1973, established nine refuges providing habitats and prey. Poaching remains a threat but the number of reserves has grown to twenty-seven. **Ranthambhore National Park**, home to tigers that are uncommonly active during the day and indifferent to humans, is among the most popular.

While tigers and elephants can be seen in several regions, other species are reduced to specific habitats: The one-horned rhino roams remote **Kaziranga National Park**, and the Asian lion has as its only earthly sanctuary **Gir National Park**.

Endangered Indian elephants, smaller than their African brethren, have for centuries worked with mahouts, or handlers. In **Corbett National Park**, less than two hundred miles from Delhi and reachable by car or train, visitors take guided elephant-back safaris during which a "Jungle Book" cast of tigers, leopards, bears, and other exotic species may appear.

## EXPERIENTIAL TRAVELING

### LODGING

**Taj Hotels** [tajhotels.com] is opening four wilderness lodges near tiger reserves. The first, beside Bandhavgarh National Park, begins welcoming guests in October. Bhaghela Museum in the park displays treasures of the state's former ruler, including the maharaja's throne and a swing studded with precious stones and Belgian-cut glass.

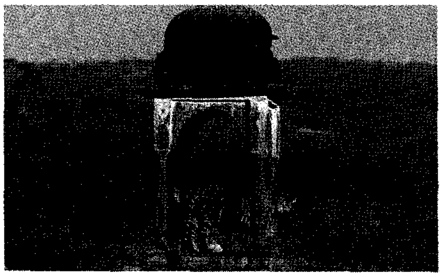
**The Oberoi Vanyavilâs** [oberoivanyavilas.com] is a luxurious jungle resort on the edge of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. It features twenty-five exquisite tented accommodations inside private walled gardens and a spa where treatments combine Ayurvedic and Western techniques.

### TOURS

**Ker & Downey** [kerdowney.com] escorts travelers on Indian safaris. Its fifteen-day "Majestic India" tour includes visits to Gir and Bandhavgarh national parks to provide a variety of wildlife experiences. Customized itineraries are available.

Pushkar Fair [October 29th–November 5th]. This colorful annual desert livestock fair attracts 200,000 camel traders, tribal villagers, dancers, acrobats, magicians, and others to camel races, bazaar bargains (stock up on flashy camel tassels here), feasts, and performances. **Abercrombie & Kent** [abercrombiekent.com], **Mountain Travel Sobek** [mtsobek.com], and **National Geographic Expeditions** [nationalgeographicexpeditions.com] all lead travelers here.

**Visit IncredibleIndia.org for more information.**



For an unmatched royal experience, visit the Sunderbans and the forests of Ranthambore - residence of the Royal Bengal Tiger. He can also be spotted at Corbett National Park.

The Indian Elephant is the wobbly throne on which tourists are carried from one forest to another. The Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary is its favorite haunt.

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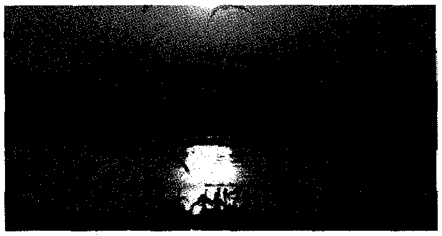

Gir National Park, with its mix of teak, ber, flame of the forest and banyan trees, is ideal for the Asiatic Lion.

The Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros prefers the vast, open spaces of Kaziranga Wildlife reserve.

There are pythons in the Indian jungles. Dizzy peacocks, Grizzly bears. Heck, even asses. Enough wildlife to fill one's imagination with many fireside stories.

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# Enigmatic Destination Piques the Senses

by Rob Rachowiecki

Claiming more than 1,400 miles of desert coastal lowlands that sharply ascend to glacial Andean cordilleras reaching four miles into the sky, Peru is among the world's most geographically diverse countries. This mountain system precipitously plunges into the depths of Amazonian jungles, which cover over half the country. The climate is equally varied, with regions among the driest and the wettest on earth endowing the country with record levels of biodiversity.

## WHERE THE WILDLIFE IS

Peru boasts more than 1,800 bird species (twice as many as in all North America), with more discovered every year. Small wonder that birders from the world over come to photograph squawking flocks of parrots and macaws at clay licks bordering the Amazon, or to marvel at the iconic Andean condor soaring past the planet's highest tropical mountains.

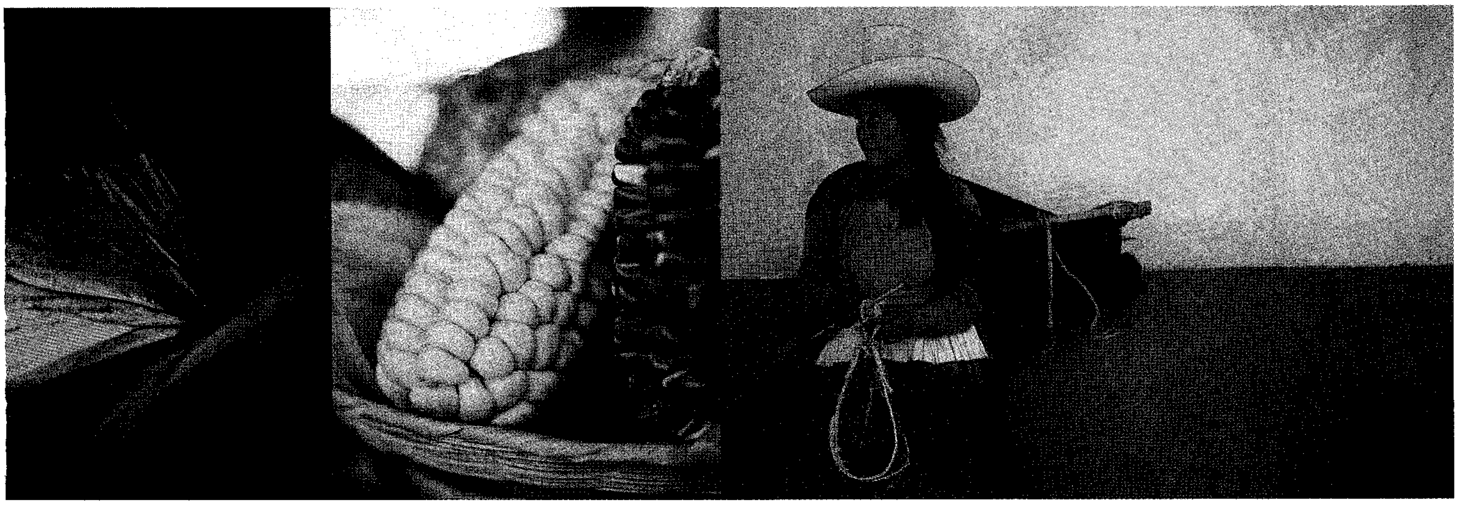
Wildlife enthusiasts converge on the coast to observe sea-lion colonies, trek into the Andes to view llamas, alpacas, and vicuña (camelids) or descend into the Amazon rain forest where flora and fauna are in splendid abundance. Based in remote jungle lodges, adventurous travelers voyage in dugout canoes guided by eagle-eyed locals who know where to find cavorting monkeys, families of giant river otters, banana-beaked toucans, and elusive jaguars. The indigenous peoples living here are frequently separated by language, of which there are dozens, but are often united by fables about the mysterious pink river dolphins. Said to transform themselves into humans, they are sometimes conveniently blamed for a surprise pregnancy!

## ANCIENT WONDERS

Almost half of the population is indigenous, with most speaking the Quechua tongue that links it to the great Inca Empire. During the fifteenth century, the Incas constructed an Andean road network from present-day Colombia to Argentina that connected marvelous temples and cities, of which the most famed is Machu Picchu. Intrepid hikers reach the site with a four-day trek along the Inca Trail, while others experience the dramatic scenery via train or helicopter that depart from the Inca capital of Cusco (Quechua for "navel of the earth").

Peru's prehistoric sites are as varied as its geography and peoples, and the Inca are the tip of an archaeological iceberg that goes back almost five thousand years. A seemingly unending array of tombs, pyramids, and sacred places continues to be unearthed by treasure-seekers, explorers, and scientists. In 1987, an incredibly rich and well-preserved tomb was discovered deep within a huge pyramid at Sipán, built by the Moche in the northern coastal desert around 300 A.D. Excavation revealed the most precious intact burial site ever found in the continent. After restoration, its valuable contents toured worldwide before being permanently installed

*FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:* MACHU PICCHU © PROMPERU; YOUNG GIRL NEAR QUESCA © FRÉDÉRIC LAGRANGE; GOURDS © FRANCESCO VENTURI/CORBIS;



in the Royal Tombs Museum in Lambayeque. From Lima, take a short flight to nearby Chiclayo or travel like a local on a comfortable all-day bus along the coast.

Roughly contemporary to the Moche period, unrelated cultures of the southern coastal area created giant biomorphic and geometrical figures known as the Nasca Lines. Covering miles of high desert plateau, the enigmatic designs, including a coil-tailed monkey and spread-winged condor, are each larger than a football field, while the geometric patterns are perfectly proportioned and bigger still. Why the lines were executed baffles archaeologists, and how prehistoric Nasca people achieved this graphic precision continues to mystify mathematicians. To fully appreciate the spectacle, airborne tours in light aircraft available locally are essential.

**Revolutionary Discovery** The oldest organized cultures are found near the Pacific Coast. Some were thought to date back almost four millennia, until a recent excavation at Caral revealed pyramids and plazas that were carbon-dated to between 3000 and 2000 B.C. (around when the Egyptians were building their own pyramids), making Caral by far the oldest-known urban society in the Americas.

**INSIDE INFORMATION**

*For best exchange rates use debit cards in ATMs; credit-card commissions are as high as ten per cent.*

*January through April is the wettest period in the mountains; May is gloriously green, and June through August is peak season.*

*Book reservations for Inca Trail hikes ninety days or more in advance.*

*For better digestion at high altitude eat a big lunch and a lighter dinner.*

*Taxis are meter-less: Arrange fares beforehand and haggle hard!*

*Internet cafés are everywhere and charge a dollar or less per hour.*

*Remember that a $30.25 cash tax is charged at Lima airport before your international departure.*

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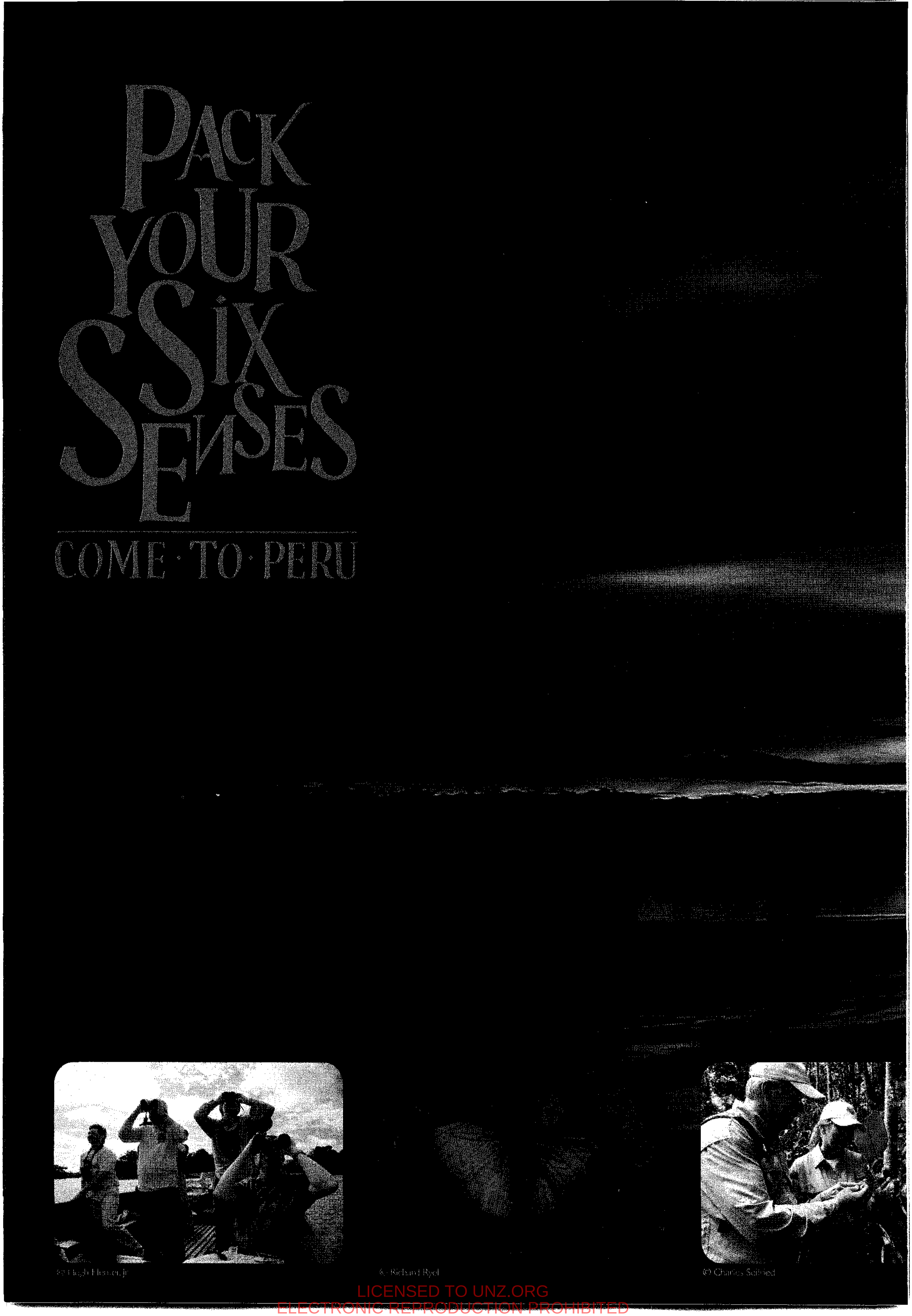
## GASTRONOMIC SECRETS

Peruvian gastronomy has transcended its ancient origins to become one of the country's greatest secrets. Using the freshest of local produce, Peruvian cuisine is world-class. Ceviche, for example, containing chunks of fresh fish or other seafood marinated in lime, is the unofficial national dish and the people's favorite. Usually complemented with sweet or toasted corn, tangy onions, hot peppers, and yuca, the recipe varies from restaurant to restaurant, each claiming to prepare the best.

The adventurous palate can feast on *rocoto relleno* (stuffed hot peppers), *ají de gallina* (shredded chicken in a mouth-watering sauce of milk, mild peppers, cheese, nuts, and onions), tender goat stew, or roasted guinea pig—once considered the special dish of Incan nobility. Accompany your meal with the superbly smooth national cocktail, the pisco sour, made from a white-grape brandy distilled on the South Coast.

Peru has more to offer than can be imagined, and inquisitive travelers discover how the friendliness of the sybaritic Peruvians, the extraordinary wildlife and archaeological wonders, and the fantastic scenery and cuisine continue to call them back to this most diverse of countries.

*(**Rob Rachowiecki** has guided adventure tours to Peru for more than twenty years and authored several guidebooks.)*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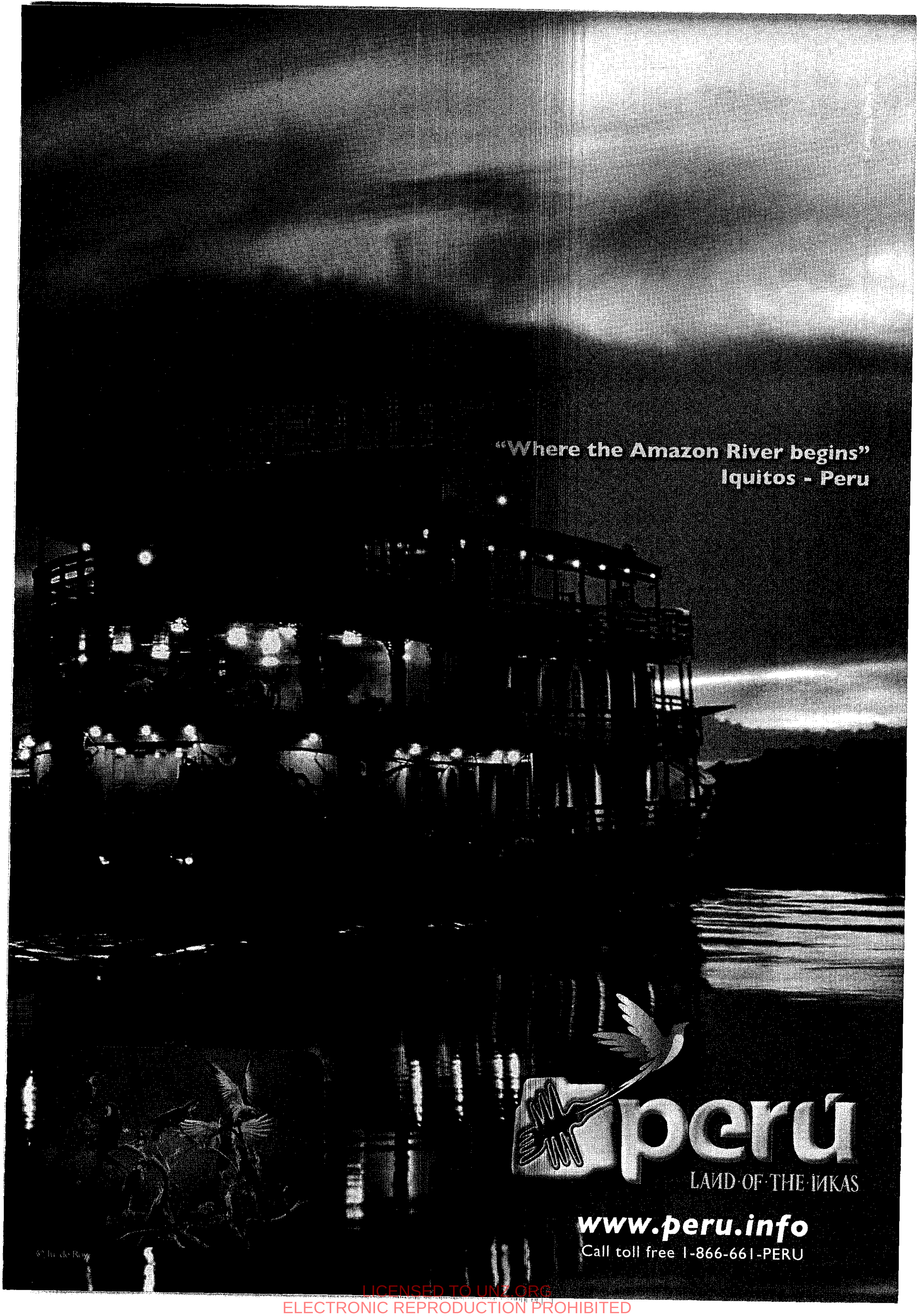
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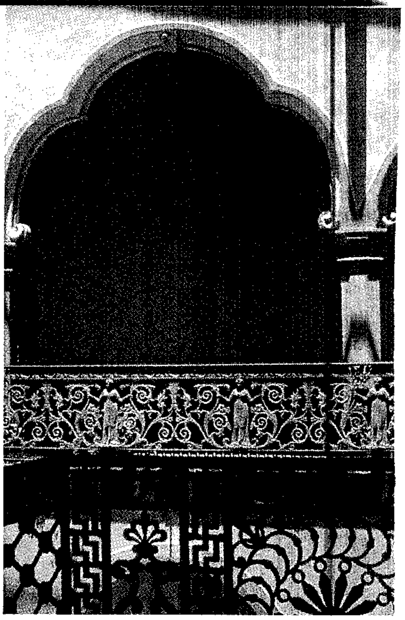
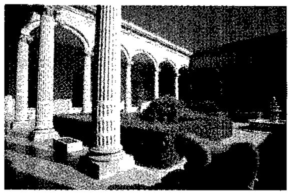




# Optical Allusions

FROM THE MAYA CITY of Chichén Itzá to Enrique Norten's steel-and-glass structures, Mexican landmarks span millenia on an awesome scale. For visitors trying to comprehend it all, it's satisfying to find both the vantages that display the art of more than one era and the connections among different styles. A good place to start is in the heart of Mexico City, at the site of **Templo Mayor,** where the Aztecs built seven temples over a two-century period.

A short stroll from the complex, you can walk through the Baroque portals of the **Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso,** a former Jesuit school built in the late-sixteenth century. Inside, arcaded courtyards are brilliant with the post-revolution murals of David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco. Diego Rivera painted his mural, "La Creación," here after returning from his first glimpse of pre-Conquest murals at Chichén Itzá.

You can enjoy the largest private collection of works by Rivera and Frida Kahlo at the **Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiño** in Xochimilco, just south of Mexico City. Housed in a grand seventeenth-century hacienda, the museum's diverse galleries let you study hundreds of pre-Hispanic images alongside those painted by Rivera of his wife and of Olmedo, his longtime friend and patron.

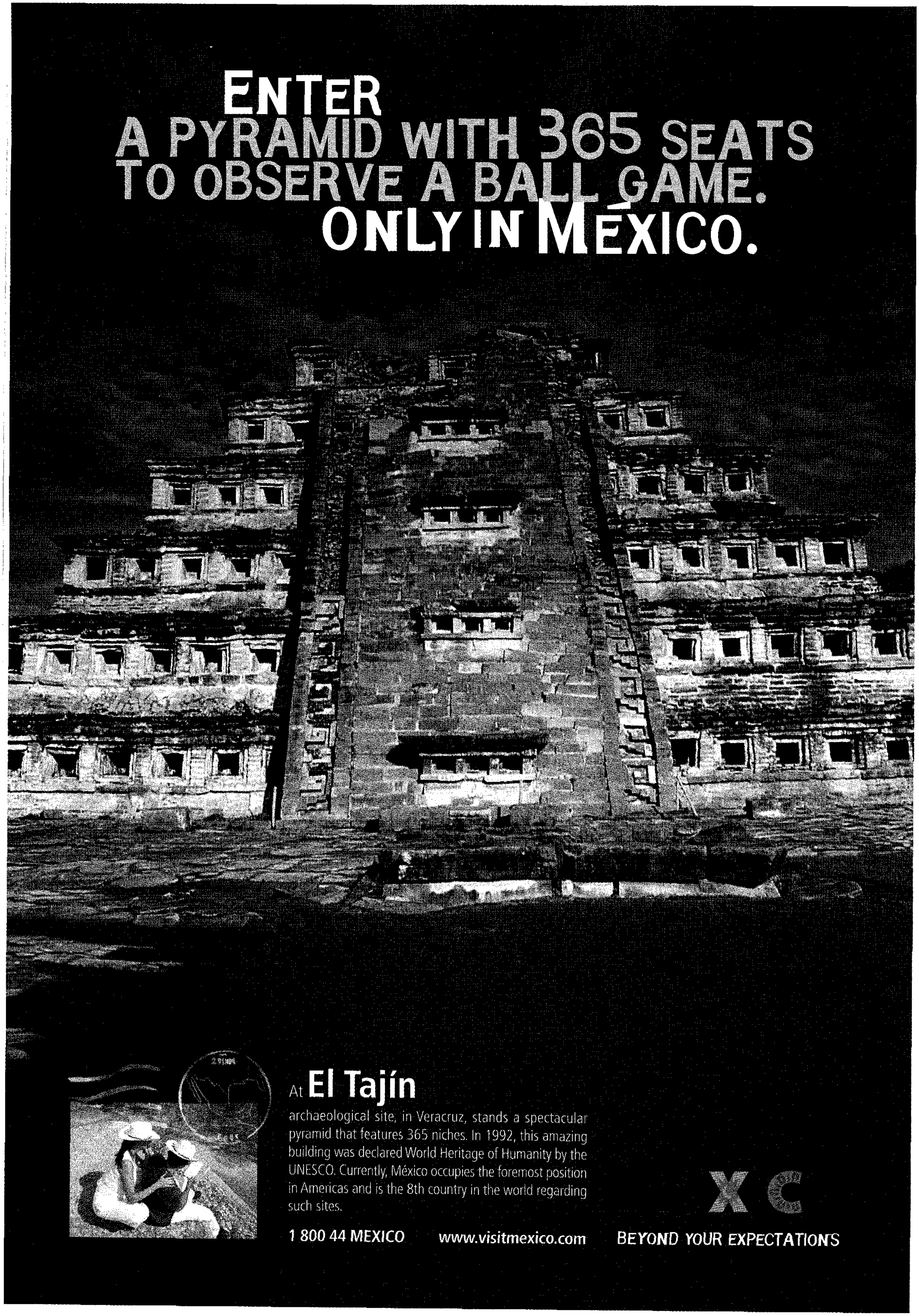
Historian Edward Gibbon called Guadalajara "the Florence of Mexico" even before the city's visual riches were enhanced by the **Instituto Cultural Cabañas,** a UNESCO World Heritage site. This neoclassical structure was built by Manuel Tolsá as a Catholic house of charity in the early eighteen-hundreds, with twenty-three courtyards. In the nineteen-thirties, Orozco brought to it the dazzling drama of fifty-three murals, including "El Hombre de Fuego" in the main chapel's dome.

Architecture buffs head for the desert city of **Zacatecas** in the north central highlands to see the extraordinarily ornate façade of the town's pink stone cathedral. Thanks to two museums created here by the twentieth-century artists Pedro and Rafael Coronel, they can also immerse themselves in stunning collections of pre-Hispanic work, Spanish paintings and drawings, and Mexican masks. So that even in this out-of-the-way place, eras intersect to invite and indulge contemplation.

### SPIRITUAL SPACES

Among the work of Pritzker Prize winners, that of Mexico's foremost modern architect, **Luis Barragán** (1902-1988), stands out for its quiet serenity. To experience its magical interplay of light, color, and planes, visit Barragán's Mexico City home, now a museum in Tacubaya.

**For information on Mexico, go to VisitMexico.com or call 800-44-Mexico.**



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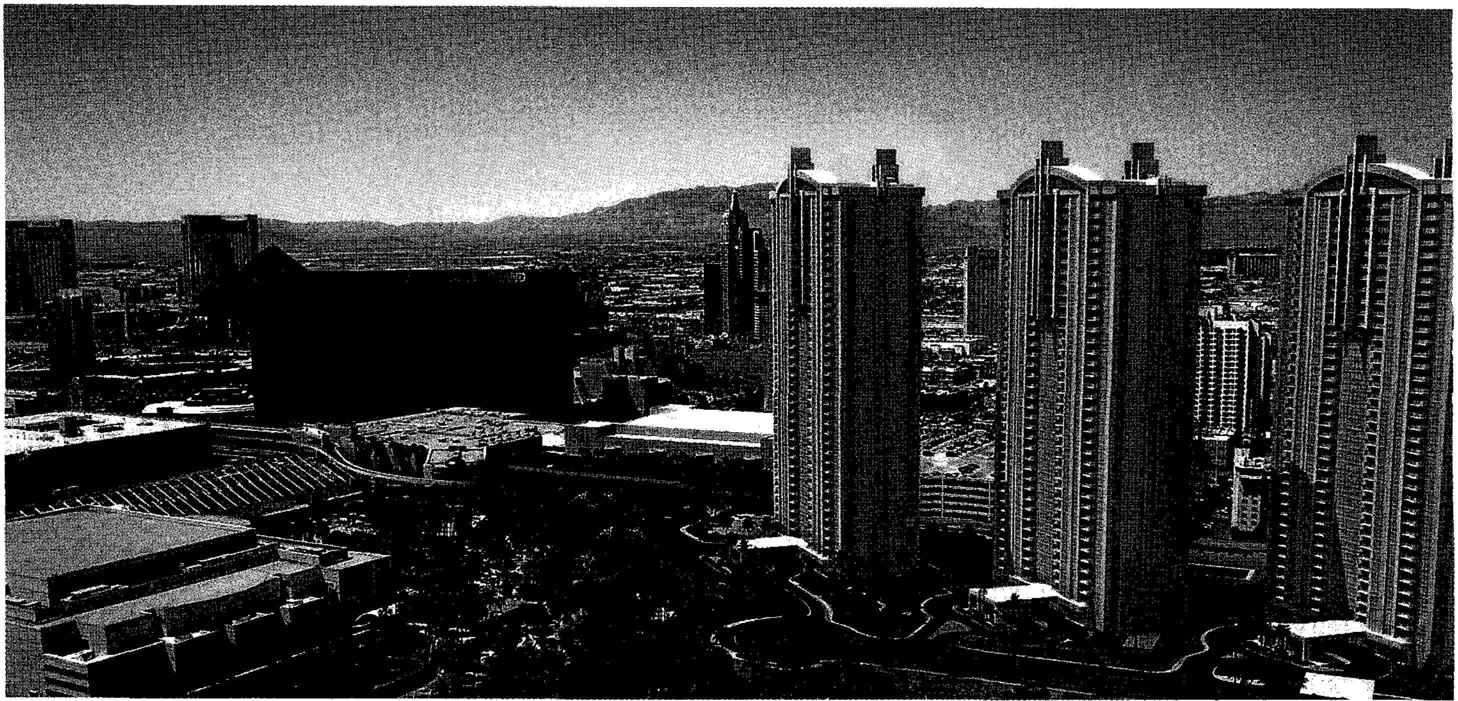

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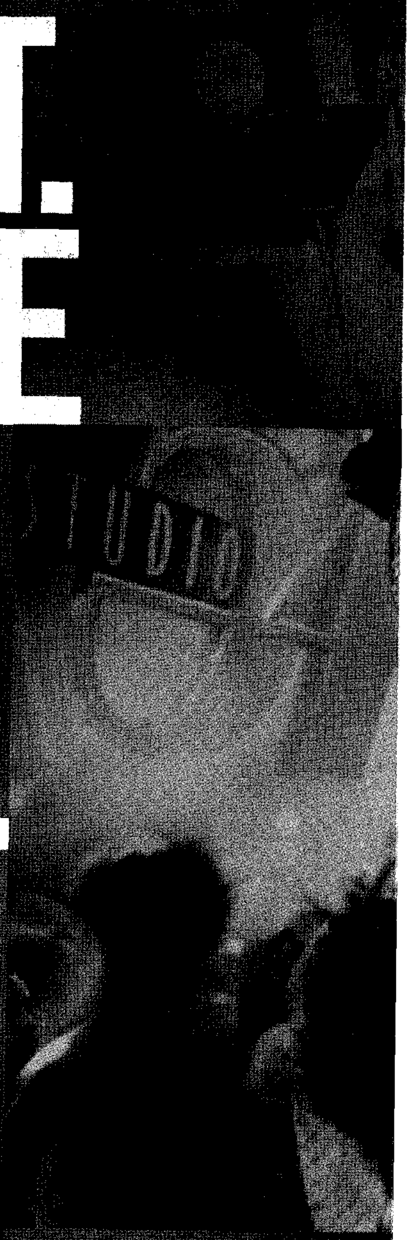

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## LETTER FROM RUSSIA

# PLANET KIRSAN

*Inside a chess master's fiefdom.*

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov is not your typical post-Soviet millionaire Buddhist autocrat. He is the ruler of Kalmykia, one of the least well known of Russia's twenty-one republics. He also happens to be president of the Fédération Internationale des Échecs, or FIDE, the governing body of world chess. Ilyumzhinov functions a bit like the Wizard of Oz. Instead of a balloon, though, he uses a private jet. In Kalmykia, a barren stretch of land wedged between Stavropol and Astrakhan, on the Caspian Sea, you can't miss the man: his picture dominates the airport arrivals hall, and billboards all along the rutted road that leads to Elista, the capital, show him on horseback or next to various people he regards as peers—Vladimir Putin, the Dalai Lama, the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II. At the local museum, an exhibit called Planet Kirsan displays gifts that he has received from visiting dignitaries. Another exhibit, devoted to his chess memorabilia, is on view at the Chess Museum, which is housed on the third floor of the Chess Palace, in the center of Chess City, which Ilyumzhinov built on the outskirts of the capital—at a cost of nearly fifty million dollars—for the 1998 Chess Olympiad.

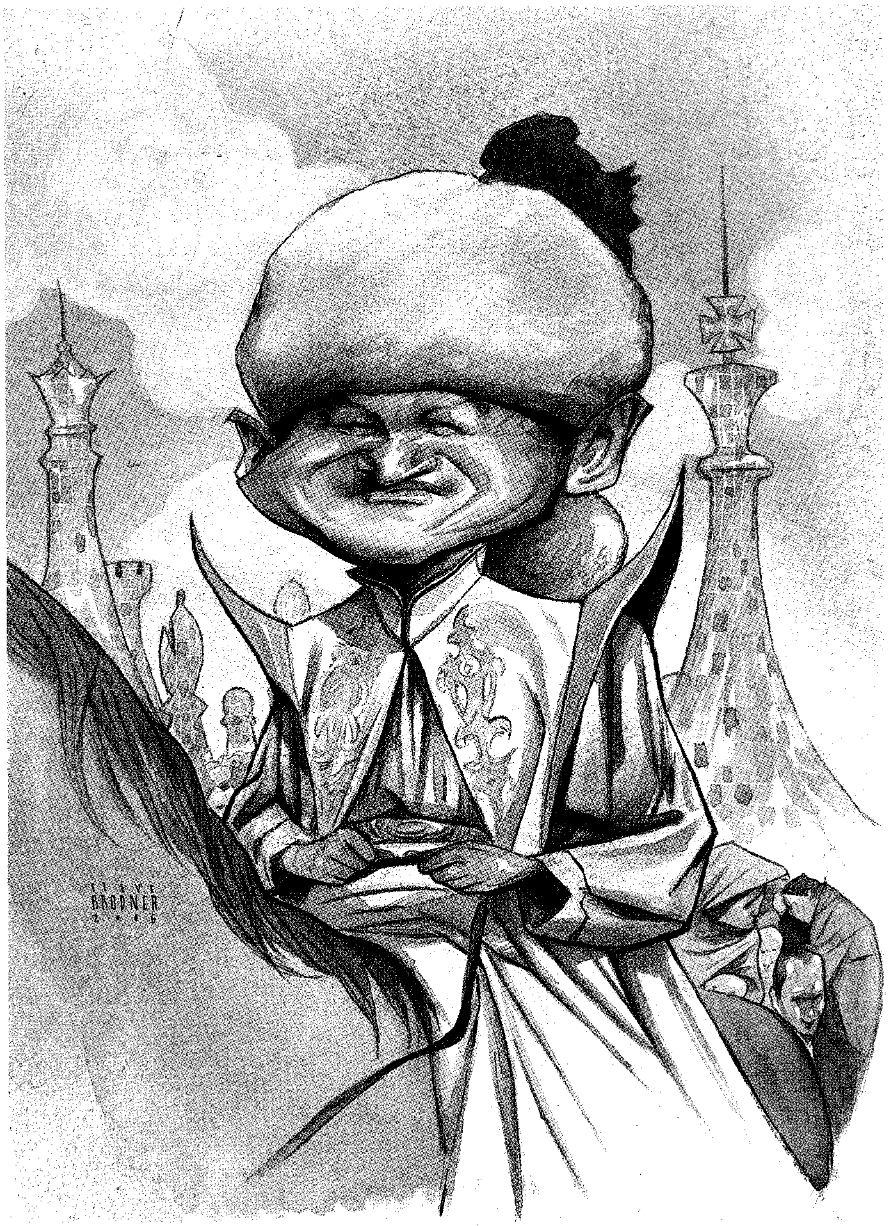
Ilyumzhinov was the Kalmyk national champion by the age of fourteen, and he is convinced that, with his authority as the president of FIDE, he can turn a nearly empty desert the size of Scotland into a chess paradise. He sees Kalmykia as the crossroads on a modern version of the Silk Route, with hordes of chess players replacing caravans of Khazars and Scythians. "Everything here comes from my image," he told me, with a shrug, one afternoon not long ago. "I am lifting the republic up."

Many people dispute the last part of that assertion, but nobody questions the first. Ilyumzhinov was elected President in 1993, at the age of thirty-one. He immediately abolished the parliament, altered the constitution, and lengthened his term of office. He finds little beauty in democracy and readily concedes that his republic is corrupt. ("Who was it that they arrested last week?" he said to me. "Something having to do with the inspection of the lower courts—for bribes, or something. Anyway, while money exists, while there is government, beginning with the Roman Empire, and in the thousands of years since—it's always been a problem.")

Ilyumzhinov has clashed many times with the Kremlin—most famously when, in 1998, he threatened to sever ties with Russia and turn Kalmykia into an independent tax haven, like Luxembourg or Monaco. Kalmykia is only a few hundred kilometres north of Chechnya, which has been attempting, bloodily, to secede from Russia for three hundred years. Moscow does not joke about those issues, and in 2004 Putin put a stop to the direct election of regional leaders. The new rules looked certain to end the flamboyant young Ilyumzhinov's political career. Yet, last June, Putin flew to Elista and spent an hour alone with him. Nobody revealed what was said, but when the two men emerged and posed for pictures a glimmer of delight shone in Ilyumzhinov's deep black eyes. Putin looked stiff, dour, and paternal. When the time came to name a new leader, Putin nominated the old one. The choice was ratified instantly by the parliament that Ilyumzhinov had created to replace the one that he had dismissed.

Ilyumzhinov called his autobiography, published in 1998, "The President's Crown of Thorns." (Chapter titles include "Without Me the People Are Incomplete," "I Become a Millionaire," and "It Only Takes Two Weeks to Have a Man Killed.") In the book, he describes growing up in Elista. After high school, he worked in a factory and served in the Soviet Army. He then attended Moscow's Institute for Foreign Relations, where he met people like Brezhnev's grandson and Castro's nephew, establishing connections that proved useful in the waning days of Communism, and even more so afterward. Ilyumzhinov profited greatly from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Like many other ambitious *biznesmeny* who found themselves in Moscow in the early, lawless days of post-Soviet capitalism, he walked away with millions—nobody really knows how much—by, among other things, trading automobiles, and he has said that he owns a stake in fifty companies, including some banks.

Oddly for a chess player, Ilyumzhinov seems incapable of sitting still for more than five minutes (perhaps that is because he is also a former Kalmyk boxing champion). He is a stylish man—tall and wiry—and, in a part of the world where "dressed up" often means wearing clothes with buttons, Ilyumzhinov prefers well-tailored dark suits, crisp white shirts, and boldly patterned rep ties. His brown penny loafers are shiny and European. Ilyumzhinov's chess gig keeps him on the road much of the time, but when he is in Elista he moves around town in a white Rolls-Royce, followed closely by a Range Rover and a Cadillac that he bought sixteen years ago in Vienna. He keeps a black Rolls in Moscow to use on his frequent trips there. It has often been said that Ilyumzhinov owns ten Rolls-Royces. He denies it. "I never had ten," he said. "Six, but not ten. It's a good car. Well made, dependable. By the way, they are not the government's. They're my cars. I paid for them and I drive around in them. The republic didn't pay anything."



*Kirsan Ilyumzhinov says of Kalmykia, "Everything here comes from my image."*

STEVE BRODNER

With as much as seventy per cent of the labor force unemployed and a huge regional debt to Moscow, Kalmykia doesn't have the kind of economy that can absorb the purchase of many luxury cars. Ilyumzhinov may be wealthy, but his people certainly aren't, and few believe that chess will do much to change that. For thousands of years, Kalmykia's rich black earth provided an ideal environment for raising sheep and other animals. In the nineteen-fifties, the Soviets decided to capitalize on the grazing opportunities there and brought in more than a million new sheep, but the topsoil was thin, and there was not enough grass to feed that many animals. In addition, agricultural officials in Moscow had decided that only merino sheep would do. Their wool is soft, but their hooves, sharpened by life on jagged mountainsides, cut like razors through the delicate soil. Kalmykia became Europe's first man-made desert, officially recognized as an environmental disaster area by the United Nations. In satellite photographs, it looks like the moon; only the largest stretches of Central Asia compare in bleak expanses of emptiness. The sheep population, while still the main source of income, has been devastated, and attempts to raise camels on the desert terrain have been only partly successful. When Ilyumzhinov first ran for President, in 1993, he said that he would resolve this problem. He also promised each shepherd in Kalmykia a mobile phone—his version of a chicken in every pot. It was a novel idea, and people were excited, but the cell phones did little to alleviate poverty.

I was supposed to meet with Ilyumzhinov for the first time on a Saturday; when I arrived at his office, however, his press secretary explained that some rich people had suddenly flown in from Moscow "on a private plane" and the President had taken them wolf hunting. The meeting would have to wait. Rich people are flying in more frequently these days, because Kalmykia has oil and gas and an even more important resource: the sea. Ilyumzhinov has made an agreement with a group of German investors and Iranian oil producers to develop a port on the Caspian, at Lagan. The plan is to ship oil through the republic to India, which needs it badly. Kalmykia—or, at least, Ilyumzhinov—stands to earn millions. "We don't want to herd sheep our entire lives," he told me when we finally met. "We also want to develop, to civilize. For some reason, in America the people think they're entitled to live well. We also want to live well! We want to build a port. We want to develop trade. We want to create jobs. We want Kalmykia to become a commercial crossroads." Ilyumzhinov punched a silver bell on the conference table in his office. A secretary appeared instantly. "Coffee?" he asked. "Tea?"

Ilyumzhinov is capable of doing or saying nearly anything; a soccer fanatic who lavishes millions of dollars on the local team, Uralan, he announced in 1996 that he had bought the World Cup star Diego Maradona—which would be a bit like signing Derek Jeter to play baseball in Montenegro. Maradona never came. Ilyumzhinov worships Bobby Fischer, the loopy, anti-Semitic American exile, who in 1972 defeated Boris Spassky for the World Championship of chess. Fischer played brilliantly and acted like a spoiled brat. The acrimonious match, which was held on neutral ground, in Iceland, reverberated with dark echoes of the Cold War. Fischer can no longer return to the United States; he is under indictment for violating sanctions against the former Yugoslavia by playing a rematch against Spassky there in 1992. Ilyumzhinov calls Fischer a "star in the history of civilization," and compares him to Newton, Einstein, Copernicus, and the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. In 1995, Ilyumzhinov turned up in Budapest carrying a bag with a hundred thousand dollars in it. He handed the money to Fischer and said it was compensation for the fact that the Soviet Union had never paid royalties for Fischer's book, "My Sixty Memorable Games." Ilyumzhinov insists that he "takes seriously what the stars or the sorcerers say," and he often comments on his ability to communicate with aliens. In 2001, he told journalists that he had recently been on board a U.F.O.: "The extraterrestrials put a yellow spacesuit on me. They gave me a tour of the spaceship and showed me the command center. I felt very comfortable with them." Ilyumzhinov relies heavily on the services of a Bulgarian astrologer named Vanga, who told him that he would become president of both Kalmykia and FIDE. She also said that he would build an oil pipeline and a "wool-scouring factory."

So far, she has been right about everything but the pipeline. Soon after he became President, Ilyumzhinov issued a directive, Ukaz 129: "On Government Support for the Development of a Chess Movement." Since then, the study of chess has been required of every student in the first three grades and strongly encouraged for others. Clubs have sprouted, and youngsters talk about the intricacies of the Nimzo Indian Defense and the Queen's Gambit the way American teenagers might ponder the implications of story lines on "The O.C." The effort has proved successful: seventeen students from the tiny republic have received official rankings from FIDE in the last decade, a remarkable feat for a place with three hundred thousand residents. (For Moscow, by comparison, a city of eight million and still the world's true chess center, the number is a hundred; for St. Petersburg, forty-eight.) "Chess disciplines children," Ilyumzhinov told me. "They get better grades. They perform. They are focussed."

Ilyumzhinov rarely stays out of the news for long. Russian leaders have debated what to do with Lenin's Tomb since the fall of Communism. A few months ago, he came up with a solution: he would simply buy the tomb, for a million dollars, and then build a mausoleum in Elista to hold it. Most Russians laughed and shook their heads, as they often do at his schemes. There are times, though, when laughter doesn't quite work. Ilyumzhinov spent a lot of time in Baghdad during the nineteen-nineties and considers Saddam Hussein a friend. A few years ago, he offered Saddam a four-hectare plot of land in the Kalmyk capital. "In twenty, thirty, fifty years, history will have its say," Ilyumzhinov told me when I asked how he felt about Saddam now. "He did hold it all together. In Iraq, you have the Sunnis, the Shiites, the Kurds. So many problems. But it was quiet then. You had to negotiate with

God, I hate to fly.
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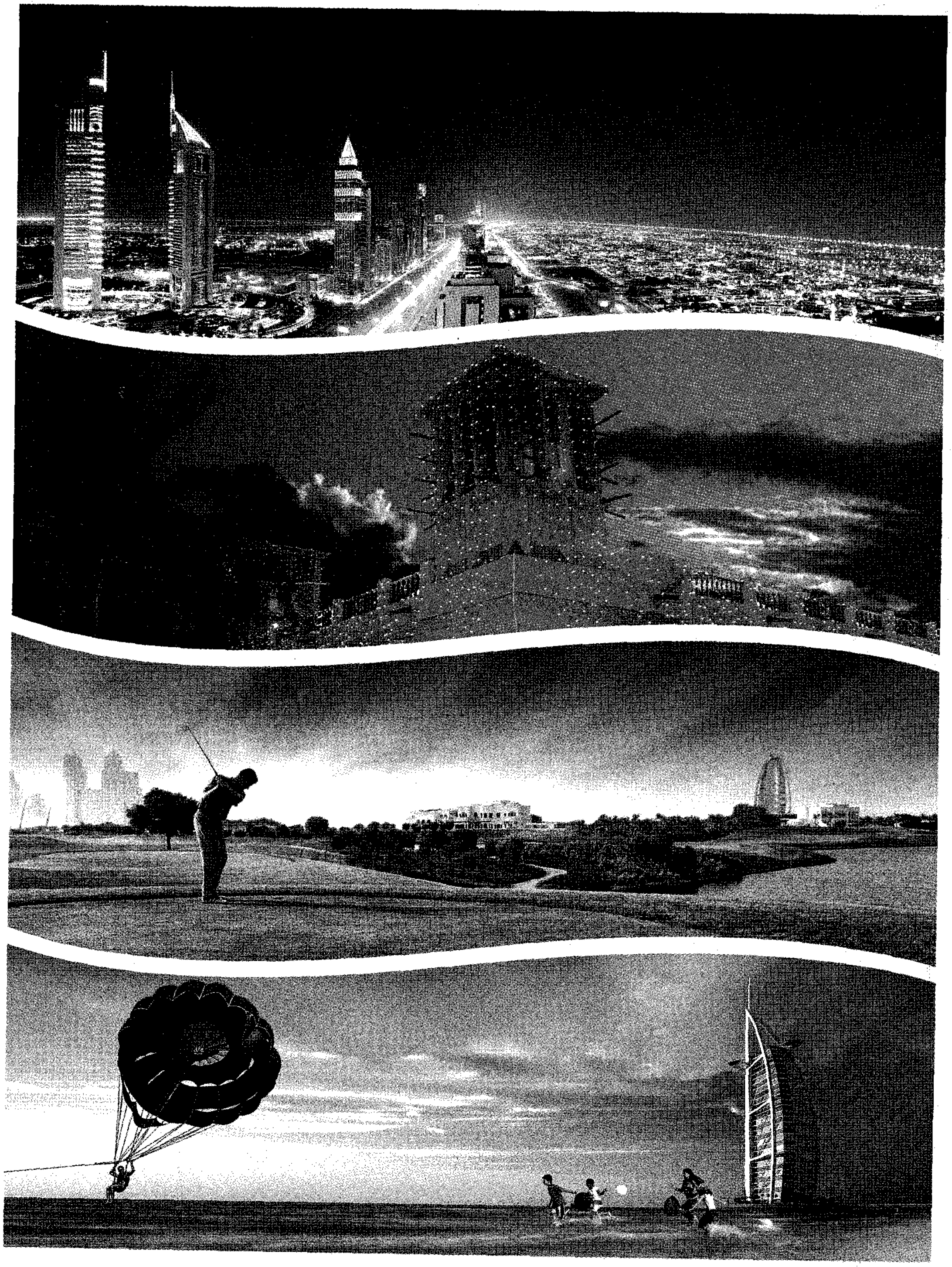

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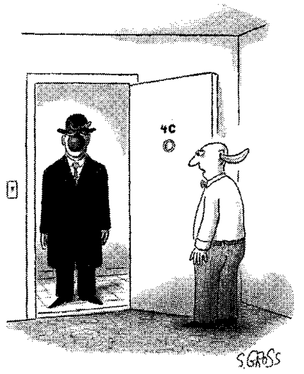

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him, but that's politics. Of course, I'm a Buddhist. When there's torture going on and blood flowing, I don't like it."

Kalmykia is the only Buddhist region in the territory of Europe. The people, whose language is derived from Mongolian, are descendants of nomads who first roamed the steppes of Central Asia nearly eight hundred years ago, under the leadership of Genghis Khan—who, as it happens, is one of Ilyumzhinov's heroes, along with Fischer and the Dalai Lama. The only art I ever noticed in the deserted corridors that lead to his office was a giant, scrolled lime-green portrait of the thirteenth-century warlord. There is another in the office itself. "I don't understand when people call him a dictator," Ilyumzhinov told me. "If there is order, if there is law, if there are established rules of the game, everyone has to abide by them, otherwise we will turn into animals. And even animals have a certain order of their own—the wolves, the sheep. There has to be order and discipline everywhere. Whoever violates it must be punished, of course, and whoever's working, well, let him work. Genghis Khan had order, discipline; he created a state, he improved the lives of his people—it was fine."

Genghis Khan's empire eventually fell apart. Most of the nomads remained in Central Asia, but one group migrated toward the Caspian Sea and settled what became Kalmykia—*kalmyk* is the Turkish word for "remnant." It has been rough going ever since. Peter I permitted the Kalmyks to build temples and practice Buddhism in exchange for defending the southern borders of Imperial Russia. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, Catherine the Great had forced the Buddhist kingdom into subjugation. More than a hundred thousand people fled across the Volga. Most died. In the nineteen-thirties, the Soviets simply took the nomads from their tents and settled them on collective farms—as they did with millions of others. It was a disaster, but much worse was coming: Stalin suspected the Kalmyks of supporting the Nazis during the Second World War, so he deported them all. Even for Stalin, it was an epic act of genocide. Beginning on December 28, 1943, the Kalmyks were loaded into cattle cars and shipped to Siberia; many died before the trains arrived. Thousands more died during the ensuing years of exile. They were not allowed to return to their homes until 1957, after Nikita Khrushchev delivered his "secret speech" denouncing Stalin. By then, there were fewer than seventy thousand Kalmyks; most of their houses had been expropriated by Russians after the war, and every Buddhist temple had been destroyed.

Ilyumzhinov decided to rebuild every one. And more. "Thirteen years ago, when they elected me, there wasn't a single Buddhist temple in Kalmykia," he said as we sat in his office, staring out at the recently completed Golden Temple. Construction took six months, and it opened on December 27th, in time to commemorate the anniversary of the day that Stalin deported the Kalmyks. Ilyumzhinov had hoped to have Chuck Norris (who had been there before) and several celebrity Buddhists on hand—he had mentioned Steven Segal, Richard Gere, and Sharon Stone. None made it; but the Royal Nepalese Ambassador to the Russian Federation was there, as were representatives of Buddhist communities from Tuva, Mongolia, and Tibet, and the special representative of the Dalai Lama (who had visited in 2004 and consecrated the site). "In thirteen years, we've built thirty-eight Buddhist temples—thirty-eight! We've built twenty-two Orthodox churches. We built a Polish Catholic cathedral and a mosque. And I want to emphasize this: it wasn't Russia that built it; it wasn't Moscow that built it, not the investors, not the sponsors. It was all built with my own personal money, and given to the people." (He made the decision to build the cathedral after a 1994 meeting with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican—even though, he said, there was only one Catholic living in Kalmykia.) Ilyumzhinov put fifteen million dollars into the cathedral and far more than that into the Golden Temple. "The entire temple was built with my money. Just now, the construction minister came by and I gave him another six million rubles"—about two hundred thousand dollars—"to pay the salaries."

The day after I arrived in Elista seemed unusually cold, even by the standards of the steppe—where winds can roll unimpeded, gathering strength, for hundreds of kilometres. Perhaps that explained why so few people were on the street.

Late that morning, it started to snow. I drove slowly past a series of Khrushchevki—the five-story, instantly dilapidated housing blocks built throughout the Soviet Union by Khrushchev, and loathed by all. Fat flakes filled the windshield as I entered the parking lot of the Golden Temple. At sixty-four metres, the shrine is the tallest outside of Asia, plopped into an unusually decrepit scene of provincial Russian life. The temple might belong in Thailand, or India. Maybe Haight-Ashbury during the Summer of Love. Anywhere but Kalmykia. The main structure, a hulking pagoda with a gilt façade and enormous red lacquered doors, was encircled by seventeen smaller pavilions, each covered in red paint and gold leaf, and trimmed in forest green. They looked like life-size versions of the parasols one often finds in tropical cocktails. Each pavilion represents one of Buddha's seventeen disciples. Scaffolding still covered parts of the main temple, and dozens of men were out in the intense cold, some chopping ice and others slapping on a final coat of paint.

Inside, two hundred people, led by four young monks in saffron robes, prayed to the world's largest plastic Buddha. The figure was made in Russia from "advanced space-age composites," according to one of the monks, and was covered in gold, with a tightly braided coil of black hair wound around the top of its head. The windowsills were painted bright red, the walls pink, and the platform on which the Buddha sat, two metres high, was adorned with a series of large lotus petals—they looked exactly like the red tongues on Rolling Stones albums. New Age music that sounded like water slowly dripping on rocks came from a boom box in the chapel. The spiritual leader of the Kalmyk community, whose given name was Erdne Ombadykow, is a native of Philadelphia, with a weakness for punk rock. At the age of seven, he was sent by his parents to study Buddhism in India, where the Dalai Lama recognized him as the reincarnation of the Buddhist saint Tilopa. He was visiting his family in the United States when I was in Kalmykia, so I met with a pleasant and studious twenty-three-year-old monk named Lobsang Tsultim.

We talked while sitting on the temple's mezzanine, which overlooks the Buddha. Lobsang showed me the library, which is not yet open, and the sixth floor, which contains a residence reserved for the Dalai Lama—if he is able to return. "When he came before, he stayed in a hotel," the monk said, shaking his head in sadness. "Next time, he can be in a clean place. A Buddhist place." Lobsang spoke of the Dalai Lama and the leader of Kalmykia as if they were of equal spiritual importance. "Our President is the builder," he said. "He supports all religions, all people. Without him, we would have nothing."

Drive along the steppe leading from Elista to the Caspian Sea—a ghostly stretch without buildings, trees, or any other sign of life, except perhaps a shepherd and a few camels—and, eventually, you will arrive in Yashkul, Kalmykia's second city. Even for an unfinished, semi-abandoned creation of nameless Soviet planners, Yashkul is a dark place on the brightest day. Dogs run down the center of Ulitza Lenina, the main drag. Dozens of buildings remain frozen in various stages of construction; the workers left long ago. Ladas made of cheap tin, no doubt manufactured when Leonid Brezhnev was sitting in the Kremlin, rust along the sides of the roads. In most Russian cities, big or small, when Communism fell so did the statues of Lenin that stood in front of every town hall or cultural center and in every city square. Not in Yashkul.

I had arranged to visit a community center, but first there was lunch with the town's mayor, Telman Khaglyshev, at the house of one of his friends. It was a fairly new and solidly built structure with a satellite dish on the roof. Khaglyshev and his friends sat in leather chairs watching an "Animal Planet" episode about young giraffes, on a flat-screen television that made the animals look as if they were in the room. It was lunchtime, and the vodka bottles had clearly been out for a while. The men were making toasts in Kalmyk—a language that few people speak anymore. (Ilyumzhinov, who studied languages at university and speaks Japanese fluently, as well as some German and English, can converse in his native tongue, but not easily.)

Like any fifty-eight-year-old Kalmyk, Khaglyshev was born in Siberia and largely raised there. A bulky man with thick, unkempt tufts of hair that seem

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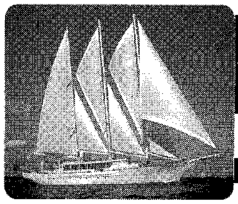

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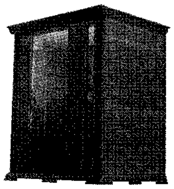

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to run randomly across his head, he was gracious but not much of a conversationalist. Most former Soviet-era bureaucrats tend to talk in speeches, and he was no exception. His eyes began to glow. "Would you have come here before he was President, ever?" Khaglyshev asked. He quickly answered his own question. "No. You are here because Kirsan has made us famous. We didn't use to have gas or hot water. Today, we have cable TV." He meant satellite dishes. Yashkul isn't exactly wired. Many Kalmyks still rely on trucks to deliver drinking water, and burn sheep dung to help them make it through each winter. "We live because Kirsan brought us back to life," Khaglyshev said. Murmurs of agreement filled the room. He spoke at some length about the roads—fifty-three kilometres of them—that had been built in the area during the past two years, and about the horses raised there, which bring high prices at markets throughout the world, and, most of all, about how the oil in the Caspian Sea would make Kalmykia rich.

"The special joy in being a Buddhist is that we do nothing bad to other people," Khaglyshev said. "Not like others nearby." He gave me a knowing look. "We are not so far from Chechnya, you know. But we are not like them. Our region is among the quietest in Russia. And, of course, Kirsan built our chess city. You can believe it or not, but the international Chess Olympiad in 1998—with a hundred and ten flags flying over the pavilion—was for Kalmykia its greatest moment." He punctuated each assertion with a shot of vodka, and insisted that his guests join him. By this time, we had stumbled to the lunch table.

"Football is great and we are a great country and we will have chess tourists and jobs." Khaglyshev had started to ramble, and, as if on cue, his wife appeared and began to pass out plates full of food. She did not speak, and Khaglyshev made no attempt to introduce her. She carried bowls of Kalmyk pelmeni—a spicy, Central Asian version of wonton soup—and dishes made of boiled and seasoned lamb, fried dough, and several other staples of a diet that has helped Kalmykia play its role as part of a country with the lowest life expectancy in the industrialized world, where most men are dead by the age of sixty.

After the meal, it was time to see some chess. The House of Culture in Yashkul is a two-story white brick building in the center of town. Most of the glass in the blue windows was cracked. A couple of panes were missing completely. The first floor was dark, cold, and unoccupied. But there was a faint sound coming from the floor above. Having spent more time than I should have in Washington Square Park when I was younger, I recognized it easily: chess players slapping their opponent's time clock after completing a move. On the second floor, there was one occupied room. A placard on the door said "White Rook Chess Club"; inside, a dozen people were sitting at tables. The youngest was a girl of eight, the oldest a man who couldn't remember his age.

Every Soviet cultural center had a devotional wall, usually filled with propaganda about Lenin or Yuri Andropov or the achievements of some local tractor factory. In Kalmykia, the objects of devo-

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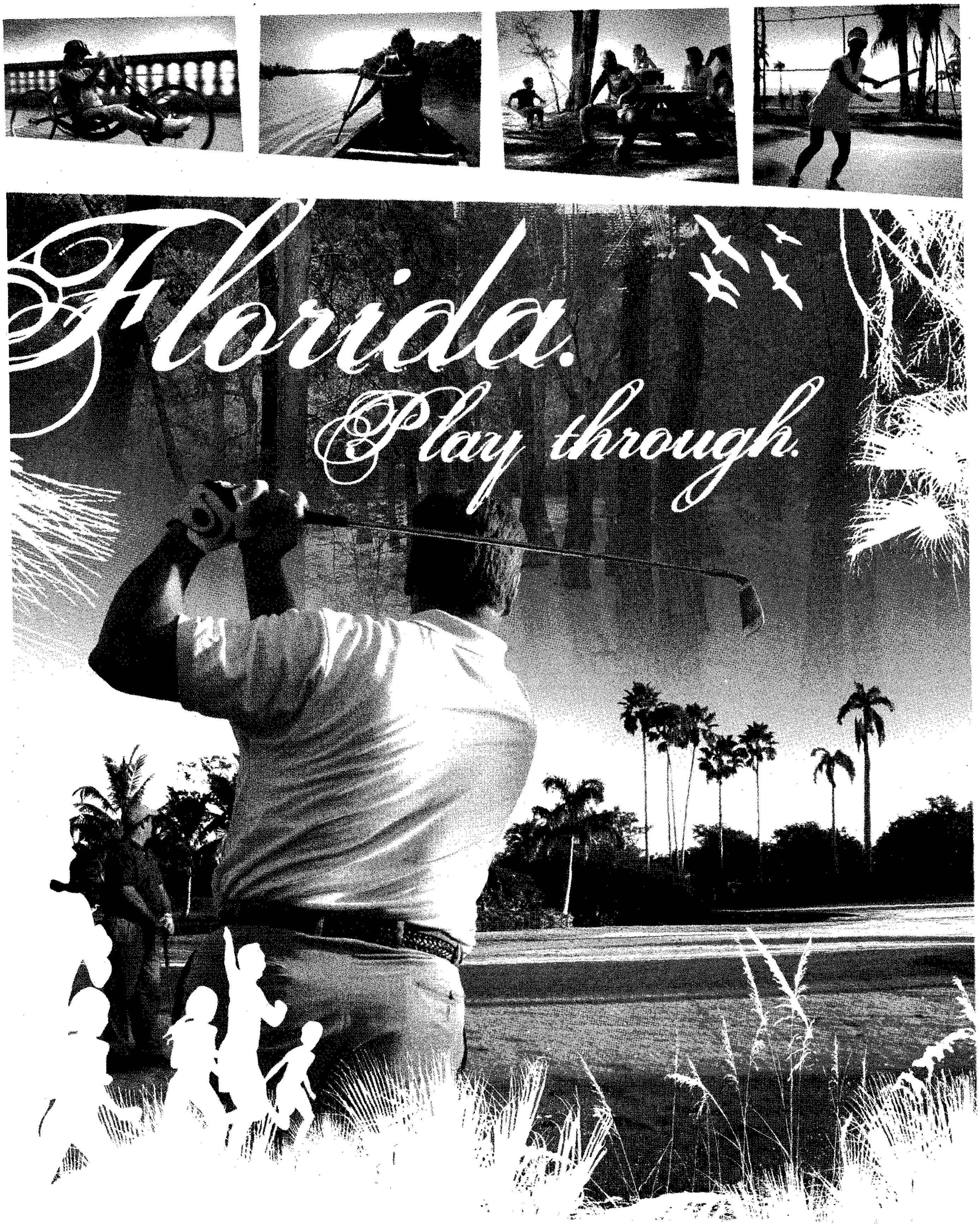
## AND SOUL

My mother died one summer—
the wettest in the records of the state.
Crops rotted in the west.
Checked tablecloths dissolved in back gardens.
Empty deck chairs collected rain.
As I took my way to her
through traffic, through lilacs dripping blackly
behind houses
and on curbsides, to pay her
the last tribute of a daughter, I thought of something
I remembered
I heard once, that the body is, or is
said to be, almost all
water and, as I turned southward, that ours is
a city of it,
one in which
every single day the elements begin
a journey toward each other that will never,
given our weather,
fail—
        the ocean visible in the edges cut by it,
cloud color reaching into air,
the Liffey storing one and summoning
the other, salt greeting the lack of it at the North Wall, and,
as if that weren't enough, all of it
ending up almost every evening
inside our speech—
*coast canal ocean river stream* and now
*mother*—and I drove on and although
the mind is unreliable in grief, at
the next cloudburst it almost seemed
they could be shades of each other,
the way the body is
of every one of them and we
were all moving now—fog into mist,
mist into sea spray, and both into the oily glaze
that lay on the railings of
the house she was dying in
as I went inside.

—*Eavan Boland*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tion were Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and other leaders of FIDE. There were also photographs or drawings of legendary chess players, from Wilhelm Steinitz, who rose from the coffeehouses of Vienna to become the first world champion, in 1886, through Capablanca, Alekhine, and Tal, to the glowering visages of Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov. The opposite wall had been given over to the women. There were pictures of a steady string of Slavic matrons: Menchik, Bykova, Rudenko. In the nineteen-sixties, they yielded to the era of Georgian supremacy. (Nona Gaprindashvili became the first female Grand Master and held the world title for sixteen years, until 1978, when she lost it to a fellow-Georgian, Maya Chiburdanidze, who then reigned for more than a decade.)

A thirteen-year-old girl in pigtails stood by the door, a welcoming smile on her face. Her name was Katya, and she had been playing chess since she was seven. We walked over to one of the tables. Books lay scattered on the floor next to it. One was called "The Queen's Pawn Game"; another analyzed a series of famous matches, which the children are required to copy and learn in school. Katya huddled with a girl who looked like a younger sister. They giggled, bent down, and picked up a chess monograph by David Bronstein, with an analysis of the 1953 Zurich International Chess Tournament. "Do you know him?" Katya asked. I certainly knew of him. Bronstein, who is eighty-two, is widely considered one of the greatest of all chess players. She was studying Bronstein!

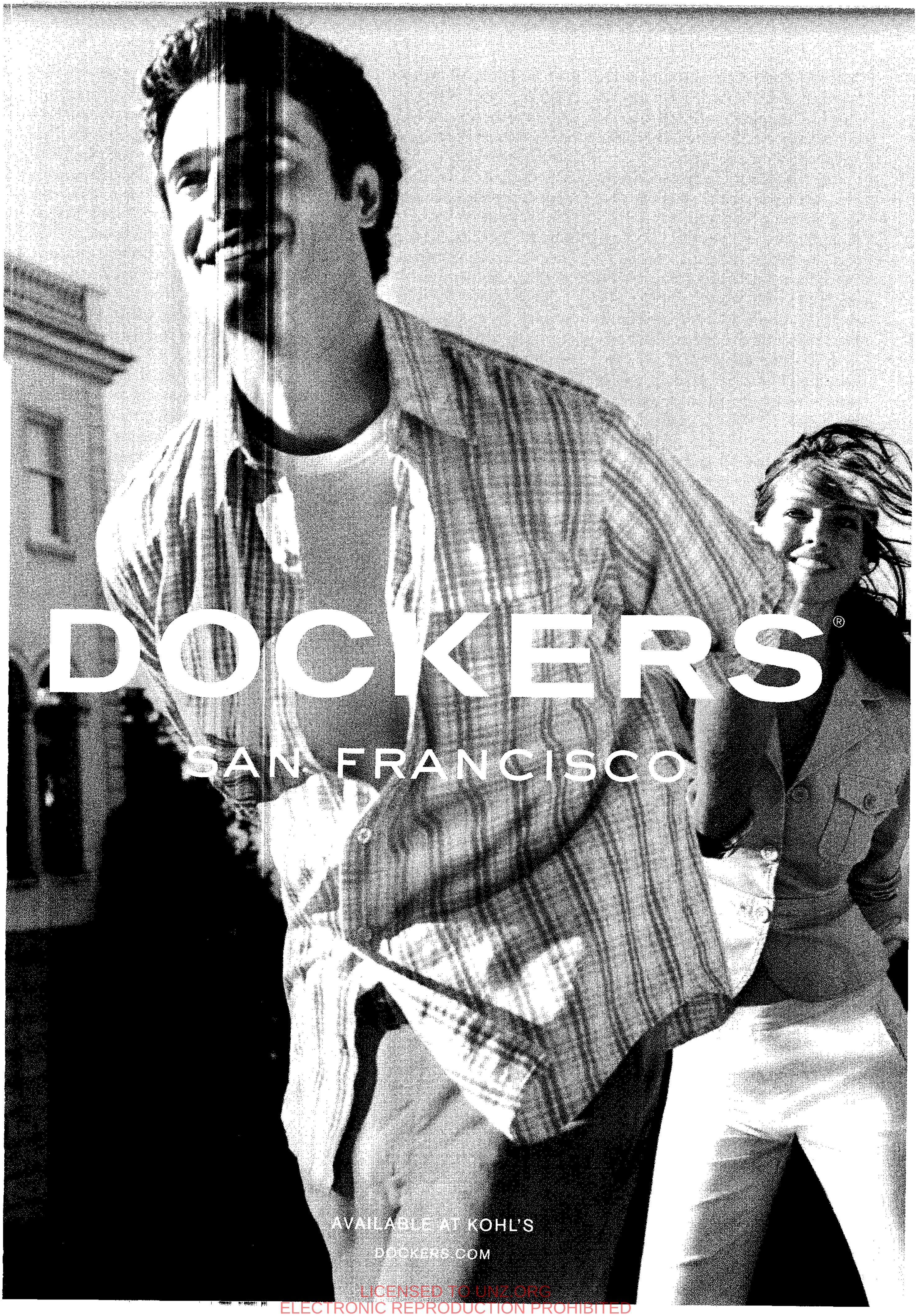
A rangy old man in a weather-beaten green vest walked over. He had spiky gray hair, and wore pin-striped pants and glasses with pink frames. He looked like a refugee from the Mudd Club. He introduced himself as Dgilayev Dorzidlandgivich, the girl's instructor, and then talked about chess, reminding me that it was Genghis Khan who brought the game to Russia. He also ran down the official list of virtues—reasoning, patience, order—that chess is supposed to instill in children. I asked him if that was why he played. He laughed and said no. "When Kalmyks lived in yurts, they couldn't read or write, but they could play chess," he said. "When we were all sent off to Siberia, we had no chess pieces or boards. I'll never forget seeing one man making chess figures out of flour and water."

The epic poem of the Kalmyk people, which has been chanted since the time of the Mongol invasions, is called the Djangar, after its hero. It contains, among many other things, descriptions of a magnificent palace with silver doors and walls of pearl and murals portraying the feats of Djangar's companions, the 6,012 Heroes. Ilyumzhinov doesn't seem to have that many companions, but he definitely has the palace. "Wait till you see Chess City," Berik Balgabaev told me with pride on the flight to Elista from Moscow. "You will never forget it." Balgabaev is the special assistant to the president of FIDE, and Ilyumzhinov's emissary to Moscow on matters of chess. (There is also a separate diplomatic mission, since, as an autonomous republic, Kalmykia conducts its own foreign policy.)

Balgabaev, who met Ilyumzhinov when they were students at the Institute for Foreign Relations, was travelling with a delegation from the Siberian region of Khanty-Mansiysk, which produces about five per cent of the world's oil, more than any other part of Russia. The group was considering building a chess city, like the one in Kalmykia. The delegation was led by the son of the governor—who happened to be the president of the Khanty-Mansiysk Chess Federation and also the region's vice-minister of construction. There were representatives from the department of physical culture, the region's chief architect, and a few women in serious sables. Balgabaev noticed that I was reading "The Defense," Nabokov's novel about a chess prodigy so obsessed by the game that, as he ages, he loses connection with everything else. "That is the worst book about chess you can read," Balgabaev said. I was surprised, since many people think that it's the best book about chess you can read. "It promotes the idea that chess is weird and that people who play it are crazy." Then, perhaps assuming that somebody writing about chess must be good at it, he asked me what my current ranking was in the United States. (I couldn't bring myself to tell him that my chess career had ended in 1970, when I traded a beautiful wooden chess set I had received as a gift for a copy—autographed by Willis Reed—of the New York Knicks yearbook.)

Except for five armed men guarding the Chess Palace, a pyramid of glass and mirrors shimmering in the frozen sunlight among groups of condos, stores, and bars, Chess City was deserted when I arrived. The city looked like a sort of Olympic Village—at least, one with a Buddhist temple and laid out in the shape of a Central Asian yurt. The most prominent picture on the wall of the palace shows Chuck Norris striding purposefully through the construction site. The palace has an airy, open foyer—like a Marriott Hotel. There were dozens of chess tables, chessboards, and chess rooms. Beautifully carved, super-sized figures sat on the squares—but there was nobody to move them. I walked through the museum, which has keepsakes from many of history's most famous matches, including the 1996 bout between Gata Kamsky and Anatoly Karpov, which Ilyumzhinov, after negotiations with Saddam Hussein, had scheduled for Baghdad. The international response was so harsh, however, that FIDE moved the match to Elista. (That didn't turn Ilyumzhinov away from dictators. He arranged to hold the 2004 World Championship in Tripoli, at the urging of another friend, Muammar Qaddafi.) Ilyumzhinov's famous chess *ukaz* is on display in the museum, as are souvenir pieces from Iran, India, Dubai, Libya, Iraq, Tunisia, Israel, Poland, and other countries. There are chess pieces made of ivory, teak, fake amber, and imitation alabaster; some are shaped like sheep, others like camels, and still others like wandering nomads.

The real cost of Chess City is unknown; Kalmykia doesn't adhere to open principles of accounting. Ilyumzhinov has said that he put forty million dollars of his own into it. "The city was built on investments," he told me. "It's all investments. There is no budget money there. And, if investments are flowing in, I think that's very good—for the republic, for the country, for the people." I asked at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least two dozen people at shopping malls, Internet cafés, and restaurants if they felt they had benefitted in any way from the construction of Chess City. Most refused to answer; not one said yes.

In a republic where people are lucky to earn fifty dollars a month, the project has generated more resentment than revenue. Ilyumzhinov had hoped that the Olympiad, in 1998, would put a spotlight on his domain. It did, but not exactly in the way that he had wanted. On June 8th, just a few months before the participants were scheduled to arrive in Elista, the body of a journalist, Larisa Yudina, was found in a local pond; she had been stabbed repeatedly. Yudina was the editor of *Soviet Kalmykia Today*, the only opposition newspaper in the region. Ilyumzhinov had banned the paper, so Yudina printed it in neighboring Volgograd and then distributed copies from the trunk of her car. She had often accused the government of corruption, embezzlement, and other crimes, and was investigating the finances of Chess City when she was killed.

Moscow officials, showing little confidence in the local police, took over the investigation, and soon arrested two men: both were former aides to Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, both confessed to the murder, and both were convicted. "You think that is so shocking?" Sergey Mitrokhin had asked me in Moscow the day before I left for Elista. Mitrokhin is a leader of Yabloko, Russia's leading liberal party and one of the few still willing to criticize the Kremlin, and he has openly called Ilyumzhinov a murderer. "He could sue us, of course, but he doesn't want all these stories in public," Mitrokhin went on. "He knows he can't afford to offend the Kremlin. Anything else goes. It's just like Latin America. In Russia today, the main talent is to stay in power."

Running FIDE helps Ilyumzhinov do that. It is the custodian of the game's ancient rules and the body that tabulates world rankings. Last year, Ilyumzhinov replaced the final match in the two-year championship schedule with a more dramatic three-week tournament. He speeded up the game, discarding the traditional format, in which players can spend agonizingly silent hours mulling over their next move, and replaced it with "rapid chess," in which a match lasts fifty minutes.

"You need to attract sponsors," he told me. "But sponsors and investors go where there is a good show, where there are a lot of people watching. It's interesting to watch soccer, right? When people are running around for forty-five minutes, for two halves, right? Or basketball. But with chess, when you have people playing one game for two, three days—who's going to watch that on TV?"

There will be an election for the FIDE presidency this fall. Ilyumzhinov is running against a Dutch businessman named Bessel Kok. Chess has always served as a barometer of cultural supremacy in Russia, and the most talented people in Russian chess think that Ilyumzhinov is a joke. "Even a dickhead would do a better job than Ilyumzhinov," Anatoly Karpov, the former world champion, said recently, when he was asked whom he supported. "The situation cannot become worse." Garry Kasparov, who may be history's strongest player, has said that Ilyumzhinov's fast version of the game "will end chess as we know it." These days, Kasparov, who has retired and moved into opposition politics, refuses even to discuss the subject. Last month, the British Grand Master Nigel Short weighed in: "It is hard to understate the importance of this election, as the future of chess is at stake. Either FIDE stays a cowboy organization, mired in sleaze and shunned by corporate sponsors, or it becomes a modern, professional sporting body committed to exploiting the game's vast potential."

Ilyumzhinov doesn't seem particularly concerned about the FIDE election. He is far more consumed with international—and intergalactic—politics. During our conversation in his office, he compared George Bush to Genghis Khan, approvingly: "Bush is creating order, conquering countries, territories, new oil wells, he hands them over to rich oil companies, they're rich and getting even richer—that's O.K. Bush has an army, he has a Congress that doles out a supplementary hundred billion dollars, he has a Senate, he has a Court. Maybe soon there's going to be a big American state. I haven't ruled out the possibility that, in our lifetime, we will all be living in an American state. But, as long as there's order and discipline, what's the difference?" Saddam Hussein was his friend. Was Ilyumzhinov not angry about the war in Iraq? "You have American soldiers dying there," he said. "Why are they dying? Are they establishing freedom? Human rights? Well, we'll see." He then returned to his conviction that the human experience might end soon anyway. "Tomorrow, aliens will fly down here and say, 'You guys are misbehaving,' and then they will take us away from the earth. They'll say, 'Why are you fighting down here? Why are you eating each other?' And they'll just put us in their ships and take us away." ♦

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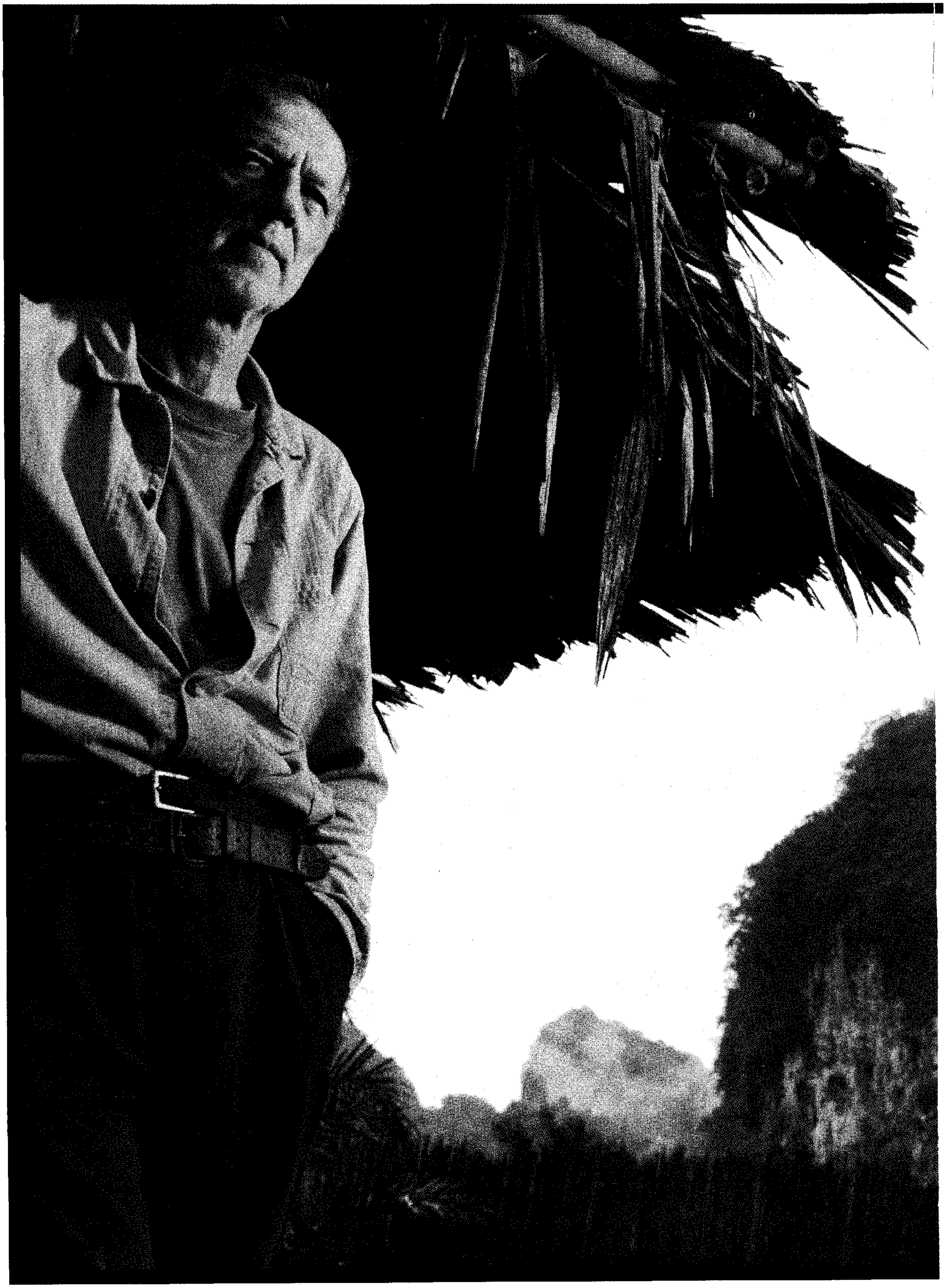


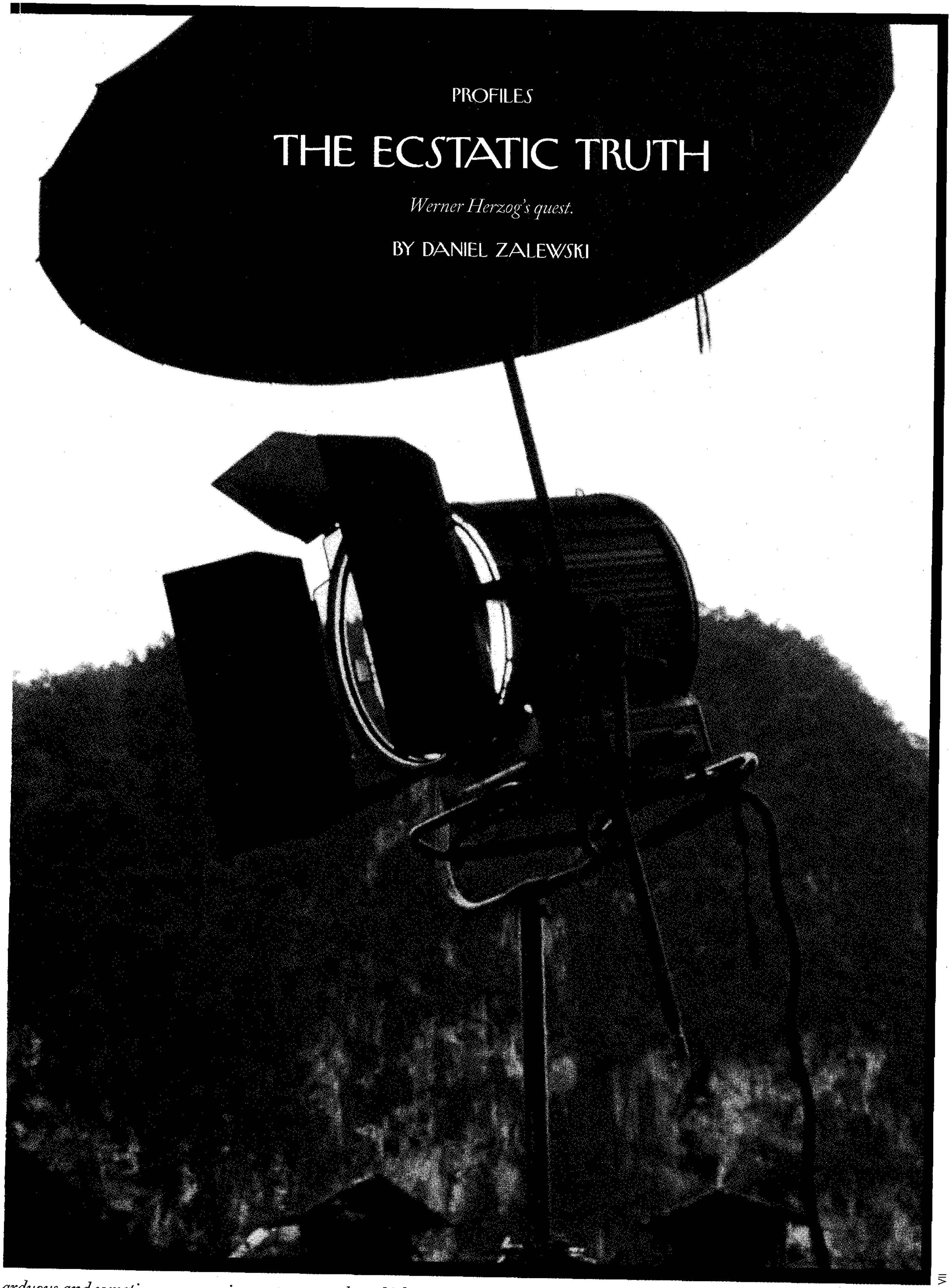
*Herzog, on the set of "Rescue Dawn," in northern Thailand. Perhaps unfairly, he is less renowned for his oddly brilliant movies than*

PROFILES

# THE ECSTATIC TRUTH

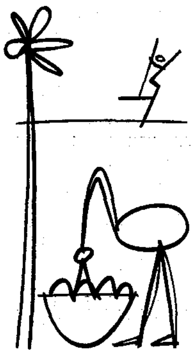
*Werner Herzog's quest.*

BY DANIEL ZALEWSKI



*arduous and sometimes savage circumstances under which they are made. Photograph by James Nachtwey.*

Werner Herzog hastily cordoned off a swath of jungle with wooden sticks and yellow tape, like a cop marking a crime scene. “Nobody will cross this line!” he announced. It was late August, and the German director had travelled to northwest Thailand, a few miles from the border of Burma, to shoot “Rescue Dawn” amid virgin rain forest. It was his first Hollywood-funded feature, and he was determined to stop what he called “the Apparatus”—a squadron of makeup artists, special-effects engineers, and walkie-talkie-carrying professionals who had been deployed to work with him—from trampling on yet another pristine thicket. Herzog, who typically works with a small crew and a minuscule budget, was pleased to have millions of dollars at his disposal, but he was not so pleased to have been saddled with more than a hundred collaborators. “I do not need all these assistants,” he complained. “I have to work around them.” The enclave he had sequestered was filled with overgrown vines and rotting, semi-collapsed palm trees, and was partially hidden by a moss-slicked boulder. Herzog, having spent his childhood clambering across the Alpine slopes of southern Bavaria, says that he has an uncanny talent for “reading a landscape,” and he could immediately spot the danger: his primeval nook was an ideal place for a bathroom break.



A dozen Thai crew members began setting up equipment at the base of a sharply sloped mountain that appeared much taller than it was, owing to the ancient, absurdly distended trees that covered it. The mountain was garlanded with picturesque wisps of mist, but Herzog, who has filmed three documentaries and three features in deep jungle, did not want the terrain in his film to have the groomed, glistening-dewdrop look of so many movies set in frond-filled places. “The moment anything on this film becomes purely aesthetic, I will stop it,” he had promised.

Herzog, now sixty-three, no longer has the virile brown mustache of his youth, but his face has compensated by acquiring a patina of menace. Gravity has given his mouth a permanent frown. His blue eyes are partially obscured by thick, drooping brows, and they are perpetually rheumy, as if he were harboring a deadly tropical disease. “I am always being stopped at airports by drug-interdiction officials,” he said, with satisfaction. “There is something about my face that is sinister.” The aura is heightened by his sonorous voice, which, in his heavily accented English, suggests a Teutonic Vincent Price. Herzog likes to say that he is “clinically sane and completely professional,” but he is keenly aware that his reputation is otherwise—“One of the most persistent rumors plaguing me is that I’m a crazy director doing crazy things”—and he is fascinated by the myriad ways that people form this impression.

Herzog has spent his career rushing headlong into new projects—in 2005, he released three documentaries, including the heralded “Grizzly Man,” and each was filmed on a different continent—but in “Rescue Dawn” he is revisiting familiar ground. The movie, his fifty-second, will be his first twice-told tale: a feature-film version of “Little Dieter Needs to Fly,” his 1997 documentary about Dieter Dengler, a German-American pilot who was shot down during a bombing mission over Laos, in the early days of the Vietnam War. After being tortured for six months in a Pathet Lao prison camp—his head was repeatedly covered with an ants’ nest during interrogations—Dengler escaped, taking with him another P.O.W., Duane Martin. Dengler helped Martin, who was sick with dysentery, trek across the monsoon-swamped jungle. He built a makeshift raft for Martin, camouflaged him with branches, and guided him westward along muddy tributaries, toward the Mekong River. One afternoon, they encountered some Lao villagers and were attacked. Martin was beheaded. Dengler evaded capture and survived for weeks in the forest, on a diet of beetles and snakes, before being rescued by a U.S. Army helicopter. Herzog became close friends with Dengler, who died in 2001. He said of him, “All that I like about America was somehow embodied in Dieter: self-reliance and courage and loyalty and optimism, a strange kind of directness and joy in life.”

In the documentary, Dengler recounts his escape in a transfixing monologue, vividly conjuring the horror of being lost in the jungle: sudden mud slides sent him and Martin careering down jagged mountains, and he woke up each morning covered with leeches. For him, wild Nature was even more brutal and confining than the Pathet Lao prison. “Rescue Dawn” aimed to convert Dengler’s monologue into visceral cinema.

To convey the feeling that Dengler’s liberation from prison was no liberation at all, Herzog wanted the new film’s star, Christian Bale, to spend time forcing his way through forest so tangled that it appeared “almost unmanageable for human beings.” The camera, Herzog explained, would trail Bale closely, heightening the oppressive mood. “We are really *with* him the whole time, trapped in this forest prison,” he said. “There is no width of perspective.”

A fast-moving cloud unleashed a short burst of rain, and Thai production assistants collected beneath the gnarled boughs of an old pomelo tree. Herzog, who was still drying off from an earlier rain, allowed his T-shirt and khakis to be resoaked as he set up that afternoon’s scene, which depicted the frenzied moment of Martin’s decapitation. Speaking in German, the director discussed how to choreograph the sequence with his longtime cinematographer, Peter Zeitlinger, a burly Czech who appeared on location each day wearing a flowing white linen ensemble. As they talked, Herzog stood in front of Zeitlinger’s camera and mimed a series of rapid actions: kneeling, twisting around, raising an imaginary blade, then running to the area hidden by the boulder.

“Don’t you want a stand-in?” Julian White, the chief lighting designer, asked. Like most of the crew, White, a commonsensical Englishman, had not worked with the director before.

“No, no, no,” Herzog said. “*I’m* always the best stand-in.”

These days, film directors typically cocoon themselves, setting up shots by watching a monitor that displays a live feed from the cinematographer’s lens; this tells them exactly how a scene will appear onscreen. But Herzog refuses to separate himself from the action: he wants to feel what he’s filming. His participatory method struck many crew members as bizarre. "How can you see the way a shot looks if you're the stand-in?" White later muttered to himself. "You can't see yourself."

Herzog was being barraged by such complaints. At every turn, crew members let him know that they considered his directing habits strange, impulsive, even amateurish. They couldn't comprehend why Herzog insisted on grabbing the machete himself when the sound crew wanted to capture the sound of slashed reeds. They were baffled by his ignorance of his own screenplay; Herzog told me that he hadn't reread it once since writing it, three years earlier, because he wanted to "respond to the situation in the jungle" and "keep things completely fresh." They were annoyed by continuity errors that Herzog considered "of no great consequence." ("Werner, isn't Christian supposed to have a rucksack in this scene?") They were irritated when Herzog declared that someone's unfinished makeup looked "good enough," and that he couldn't wait for it to be perfect, because he liked the way the tropical light was filtering through the treetops. They objected to his reliance on hastily improvised handheld shots. ("How about using a dolly just this once?") And they questioned his reluctance to film scenes with more than one camera. ("The audience will never see Christian's reaction unless you add a closeup.") Herzog's stated belief that his approach would create "an event-based dynamic, a feeling of being an observer dragged into the scene," struck many of his colleagues as a cover for a lack of technique. As they saw it, Herzog was ruining a potentially lush adventure movie by shooting it like a quickie documentary.

The fact that Herzog has been making films for more than forty years, many of them acclaimed as works of unnerving originality, didn't shake the collective judgment that he was doing it all wrong. The mood on the set was toxic. Josef Lieck, the first assistant director, who has worked with Wim Wenders, said, "For a man of his age, it's a very . . . *raw* talent. It's more like an eighteen-year-old running into the forest." A costume designer complained, "He doesn't know basic things about filmmaking, things that simply make it easier to tell a story. He thinks that these things will undermine his vision, but they won't." Harry Knapp, an assistant director, said, "There is a silent war on the set. We're all in a state of shock." Herzog, for his part, politely ignored the crew's complaints. Zeitlinger explained, "When making a film, Werner tries to pretend as if nobody is around but him and the actors."

Bale and Steve Zahn, who plays Martin, arrived at the mountainside—doing so required crossing a rushing river on a bridge consisting of a few wobbly bamboo poles—along with several actors from the local hill tribes. Herzog gave them succinct instructions; whenever he speaks, his hands make fluid, precise gestures, like those of a maestro. First, he said, Zahn's leg would be slashed by a Lao assailant. The beheading would occur offscreen. "I do not want to show any gory detail," Herzog said. Zahn would then be replaced by a headless dummy, which would collapse at Bale's feet.

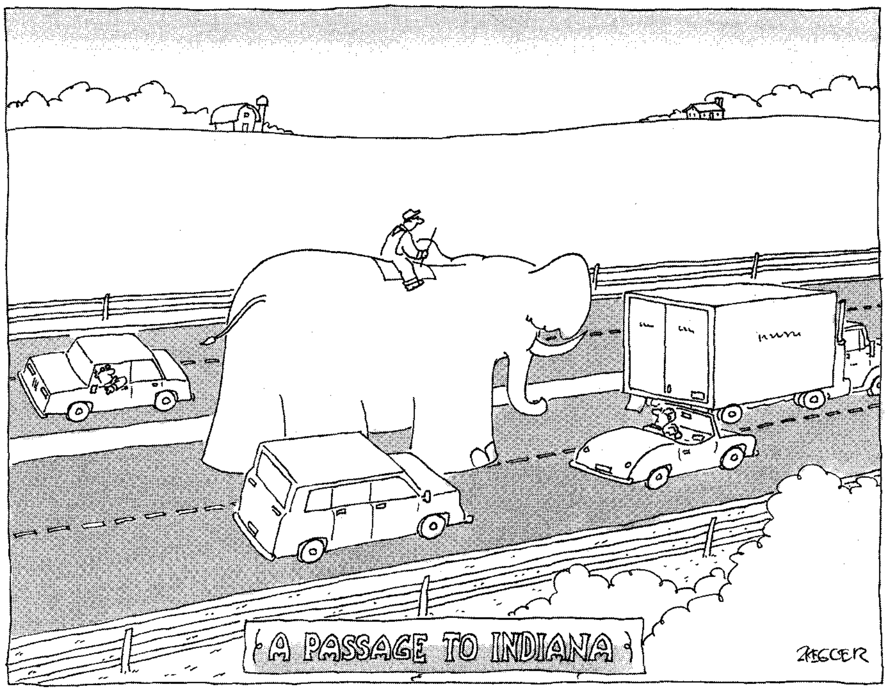
Herzog had exercised a similar kind of restraint in "Grizzly Man," which tells of an environmental activist, Timothy Treadwell, who became so enchanted by Alaskan bears that he attempted a trans-species version of going native—living in the animals' habitat for months, and getting close to them, often with a video camera in hand. The sweetly deluded Treadwell could not see the dark truth of Nature, Herzog explains in a typically doomy voice-over ("I believe the common character of the universe is not harmony but hostility, chaos, and murder"), and Treadwell's experiment ended in dismemberment. The killing was caught on tape—Treadwell's lens cap was on, so the recording is audio only. Any other director would have shared at least a snippet. But in "Grizzly Man" the viewer sees only the back of Herzog's head as he listens through headphones; facing Herzog, and the camera, is Treadwell's former girlfriend, Jewel Palovak. As she silently gauges his horrified response, her face becomes a cracked mirror of the director's, telling viewers all that they need to know.

Zeitlinger suggested a way to combine the dummy's fall with an image of Bale rising up in the background, in order to give the scene a more "balletic" feel.

No, Herzog said. "If it's too perfect, then I'll hate it," he explained. The sequence had to be blunt and brutal.

He turned to Bale, and said, "First you're kneeling, then scream, then look behind you, see the Lao guys, and scream—this way, then this way. An *intimidating* scream, Christian." Bale asked various questions as Herzog showed him how to position his body, but he was deferential. The actor, who had just starred in the summer blockbuster "Batman Begins," had long wanted to work with Herzog, and he was willing to submit to onerous demands; in about four months, he had lost fifty-five pounds for the role, becoming cadaverous.

A comfort with discomfort is widely



seen as a prerequisite for making a Werner Herzog film. Perhaps unfairly, he is less renowned for his oddly brilliant movies than for the arduous, and sometimes savage, circumstances under which they were made. On the set of his 1972 masterpiece, "Aguirre, The Wrath of God," a vertiginous portrait of a Spanish conquistador who unravels during a search for El Dorado, Herzog struggled to control his gifted but satanically mercurial star, Klaus Kinski; at one point, when Kinski abruptly announced that he was quitting the production and leaving by canoe, Herzog threatened to shoot him. ("I said, 'You may reach the next river bend, but you'll do so with all the bullets in this gun in your head—except the one for me,'" he recalled. "He did not get in the boat. I believe that it was the right thing to do. Otherwise, there would be no 'Aguirre.'") "Fitzcarraldo," released in 1982, is a beguiling folly about an eccentric music lover in turn-of-the-century Peru, who is determined to raise money for a tropical opera house. Herzog's hero decides to become rich by harvesting rubber trees, and, one day, when looking at a map of the Amazon, he impulsively concludes that the fastest way to transport his cargo is to push his steamboat over a mountain, allowing it to jump from one river system to another. Fitzcarraldo's quixotic fantasy comes to fruition in one of the most lyrical sequences ever put on film. The episode, unfortunately, is now widely recalled not as a coup de cinéma but as a leaden metaphor for the megalomania of film directors—because Herzog insisted on shooting the scene without special effects, a decision that nearly capsized the production. "Burden of Dreams," a 1982 documentary about the making of "Fitzcarraldo," presents Herzog as a real-life Kurtz—a deranged European presiding over a disintegrating fiefdom. Herzog contributed to this caricature with campy pronouncements: standing in a sun-dappled, twittering Peruvian glade, he declares, "The trees are in misery, and the birds are in misery. I don't think they sing. They just screech in pain. . . . Taking a close look at what's around us, there *is* some sort of harmony: it's the harmony of overwhelming and collective murder."

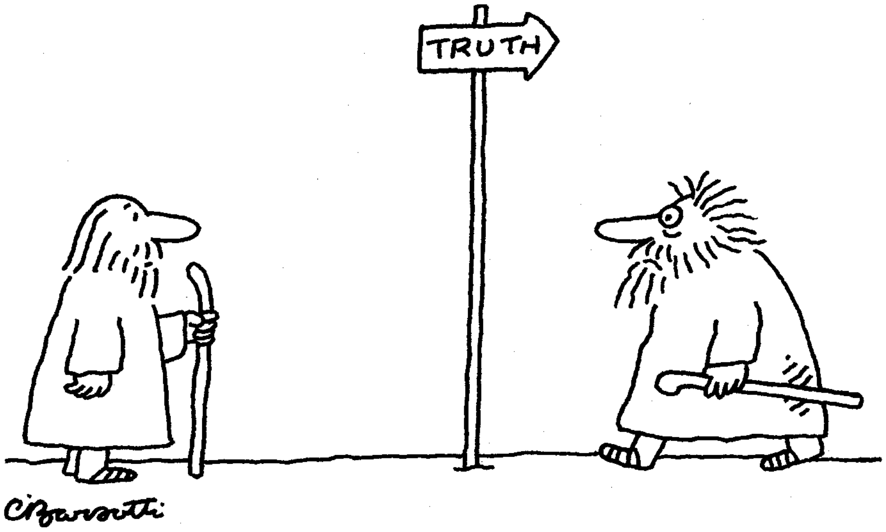
Bale, whose diet had left him severely enervated, looked wearily at the curtain of foliage into which he would soon run. To buoy his star, Herzog spoke to him about some footage that they had shot a few days earlier, which had already been processed. In that scene, Dengler and Martin become hopelessly ensnared in reeds along a river's edge. Herzog told Bale, "You have never seen anything like this on film before, Christian. I am so happy. The wrangling with the vines, it's all physical. It's physical what you are doing and what the camera is doing. So you don't sense the camera. It's like another escapee. It really feels like the jungle is swallowing *everything*, even the camera."

The river sequence, as filmed, was awkwardly long, but it would likely appear uncut in Herzog's edit. He believes in the occasional squirm-inducing shot. As he told me, "Sometimes the beauty or the horror of an image only settles in the mind when it is shown for an extended period." His previous feature, "The Wild Blue Yonder," a wily experiment with science fiction, is anchored by twenty-one minutes of unyieldingly slow underwater footage, in which a scuba diver floats beneath the Antarctic ice shelf. (The hauntingly alien landscape—in which even coral is spined with ice—is meant to represent the interior of a distant planet.) And "Aguirre" achieves its potency by instilling the claustrophobic experience of the Spanish explorers: static shots of Amazonian river bends, in which the vegetation at the water's edge blurs into a solid green wall, become highly agitating through repetition.

The rain stopped, and the equipment was ready. "O.K., O.K., let's do it *now*," Herzog said. Preparing the scene had taken, at most, ten minutes. "Action," he said.

Now it was Zahn's turn to release a terrible, valley-shaking scream. Herzog yelled "Cut!" and immediately began preparing the shot of the falling dummy. On the ground, there was a drip-covered cannister marked "SUGAR-FREE FAKE BLOOD." "We won't use too much," he said. (The sight of blood, Herzog confessed, makes him faint: "It is my Achilles' heel.") He walked over to the container, but restrained himself from grabbing it; instead, he seized an opportunity to jab back at the crew. Staring into the crowd that was hunched along the boulder, he asked, "O.K., may I have some blood from the Blood Department?"

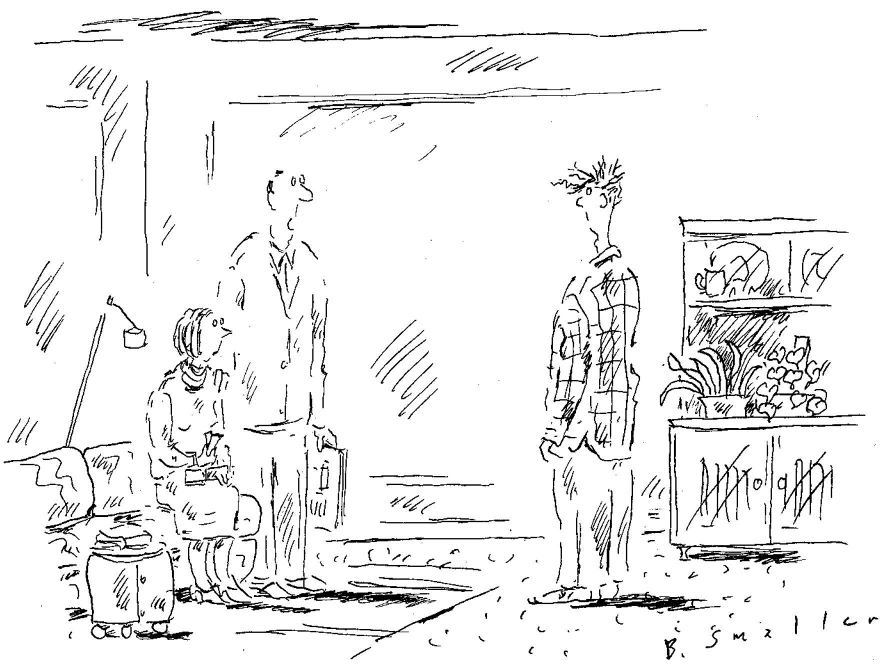
One morning that week, Herzog stood amid the charred ruins of a small straw-hut settlement. It was only eight o'clock, but the sun was already bullying; in an adjoining rice paddy, black butterflies hugged the shade. At dusk on the previous day, Herzog had filmed a scene in which Dengler, after making a bed of banana leaves for the delirious Martin, sets a thatched dwelling ablaze, in a failed effort to attract attention from American rescue pilots. Herzog had been planning to film a few additional moments at the abandoned village—a genuine ruin, which he had discovered earlier in the summer—and he was not happy to learn that it had been aggressively incinerated by his crew, after he had left. The effects team had apparently deemed Herzog's rendition of the scene insufficiently pyrotechnic and



had unleashed their full firepower, filming the village from the point of view of a helicopter, even though Herzog had made clear that he did not want aerial shots in the film. "The site looks like what you'd see after Gaiseric laid siege to Rome," Herzog joked bitterly. He is a connoisseur of ancient battles; whenever he makes a film, he takes along Livy's history of the Second Punic War. "I read it for consolation when times get dire," he said.

This was one of those times. Though shooting had just begun, the conflagration was the latest in a rapid series of mishaps. During the dusk scene, a reconnaissance helicopter had flown over the burning village, as planned, but a crucial plot detail was missing. In Herzog's screenplay, flares attached to parachutes float down from the aircraft. The parachutes had played a central role in Dengler's real-life rescue—he used their shimmery white cloth to make an SOS sign—but Thai authorities had forbidden the "Rescue Dawn" team from importing flares. It wasn't clear how to fill the plot hole. A few days earlier, Chris Carnel, a stuntman, had been carried from the set in an ambulance after performing in a mudslide sequence. Crew members felt that Herzog's version of the scene, filmed with Bale and Zahn, lacked a proper log-flume exuberance, and had not been shot from enough angles; against the director's wishes, the second unit had sent Carnel and a companion zooming down the hill several more times, propelled by water that was dumped out of a huge tank. By the fourth or fifth take, enough mud had washed away to expose a tree stump at the slope's bottom—and Carnel smashed his rib cage. (Herzog, meanwhile, vowed that he would never use the extra footage; he was confident that his shot was better, because the actors had participated in it. "An audience always feels it when it's fake," he said.)

Herzog was having other battles with the production company, Gibraltar Entertainment. Bale's involvement had helped Herzog secure financing, but, compared with the average Hollywood movie, "Rescue Dawn" had a modest budget—around ten million dollars—and Gibraltar had struggled to raise even this amount. Two weeks into the shoot, many crew members were grumbling that they had not been paid; the producers, they said, had shrugged off their complaints. Worse, Gibraltar had fired Walter Saxer, Herzog's longtime production manager and close friend. In protest, a dozen Thai crew members quit the production. The producers then dismissed Ulrich Bergfelder, a set designer who has worked with Herzog for thirty years, after a dispute over where to build the Pathet Lao prison. One of Gibraltar's principals, Steve Marlton, who was supervising the "Rescue Dawn" shoot, wanted the set constructed in southern Thailand, near the velvety beaches of Krabi. Bergfelder had argued that it would be cheaper and more authentic to build the prison nearby, in the hill country. But Marlton, a heavy man in his late thirties, was uncomfortable in the heat; crew members said that he had visited the set rarely, remaining in an air-conditioned hotel, and they speculated that he was desperate to leave the rain forest. Marlton, who made his fortune in the trucking industry, is new to the movie business. He is best known in Los Angeles for a popular night club that he co-owns, Pearl, which features erotic dancers performing inside translucent "shadowboxes." Marlton's other film projects include "Bottom's Up," a comedy starring Paris Hilton.

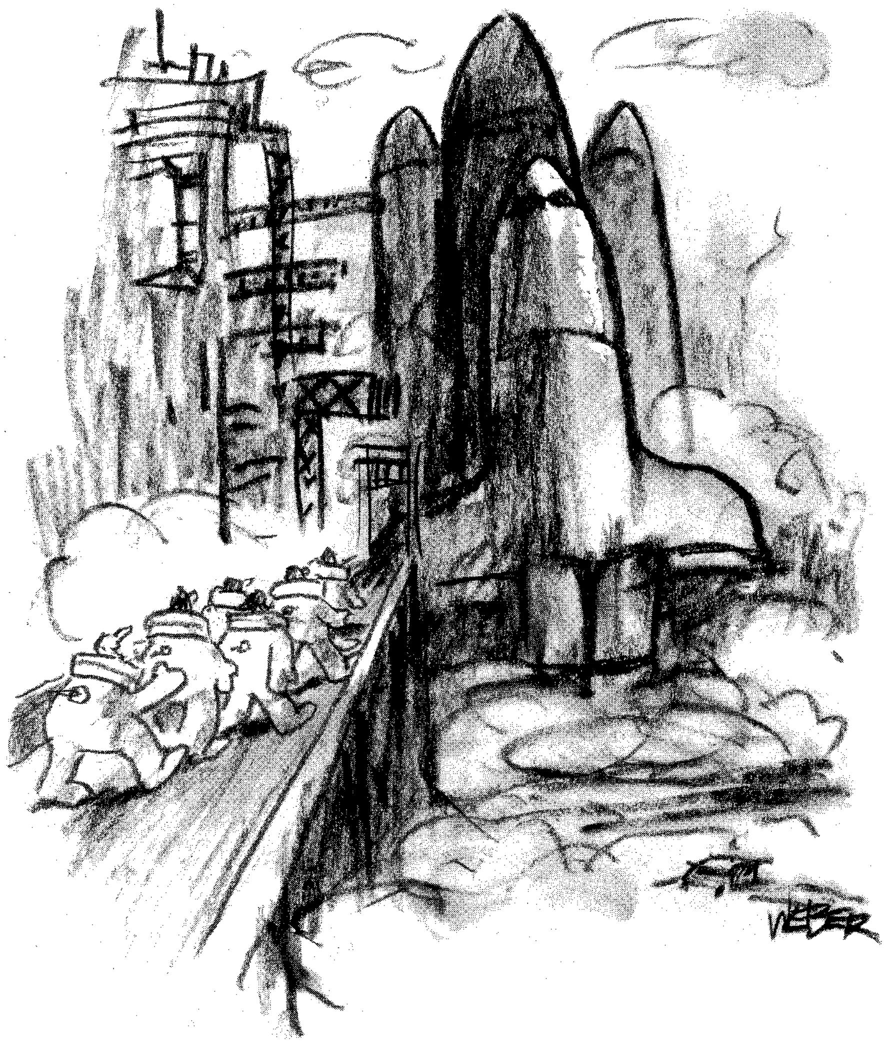


"Young man, go to your room and stay there until your cerebral cortex matures."

"This change of location was done without consulting me," Herzog had fumed at breakfast that morning. "It will be a costly mistake." The firing of Bergfelder, Herzog said, was "a way of demoting the man who pulled the ship up the mountain, by getting rid of the set designer who worked with him on 'Fitzcarraldo.' "

Herzog saw the prison-set dispute as part of a larger power struggle with Marlton, who, he said, had been frustrated when Herzog rejected his artistic suggestions. Marlton had asked Herzog to watch a DVD of a movie that had impressed him, "The Rundown"—a wildly kinetic 2003 feature, starring Dwayne (the Rock) Johnson, the former wrestler, about a bounty hunter who scours the Amazon for buried treasure—in the hope that Herzog would agree to hire the film's cinematographer. Herzog had insisted on using Zeitlinger, who is particularly skilled with a handheld camera.

"Rescue Dawn" is a canonical Herzogian tale, in that it portrays a man immersed in a situation of almost surreal extremity. Of course, that description could also apply to "Die Hard." The Gibraltar Web site characterizes "Rescue Dawn" as an "action thriller, starring Christian Bale." Since shooting began, it



*"Shotgun!"*

• •

had become clear that two rival visions had fatefully intersected in the Thai rain forest. One group of people had come to make a Werner Herzog film; another group wanted to make an inexpensive war flick starring Batman.

Herzog's inspection of the burned village had left the soles of his bare feet black. He raised his hands and told the crew that he had an announcement. After a meeting with Marlton at the hotel, Josef Lieck, the first assistant director, and Edward McGurn, the second assistant director, had emerged convinced that they would never be properly paid. "This is a very bitter moment for me," Herzog began. He wore a frayed rugby shirt and mirrored sunglasses; his sunburned face had developed a magenta tinge. "Josef and Edward do not have a contract, and they have hung in out of pure loyalty to the film and, to some degree, maybe to me. Today, they have decided that they leave the production." His voice broke off for a moment. "O.K., back to work," he said, adding a Lutherian vow: "Here I stand. I have no choice. So help me God."

The crew dispersed silently. Standing next to Herzog, and squeezing his hands with her own, was Lena, his wife of seven years. (His first marriage, to Martje Grohmann, a homeopath, ended in divorce.) Lena, a photographer, wore a celadon safari suit and had a heavy Leica camera around her neck; her lustrous blond hair was tied in a ponytail. She has published several coffee-table books—one documents the culture of Spanish bullfighting—and she regularly takes stills for Herzog's productions. "It's not an exciting assignment for me, but if I didn't do it I'd never see the man," she told me. Lena, who is thirty-six, grew up in Siberia, and, in 1990, went to Stanford to do research in archeology; with her husband, she has travelled to places even more inhospitable than the Russian tundra. "I remember the time we visited this tribal area, five days by boat from Guayaramerín, Bolivia, which we were told was cannibalistic," she recalled. "We spent the night outside, in two hammocks. That night, when I heard a noise near us, I woke up, gasping, 'Werner, it's *them!*' He sleepily replied, 'When they come, we won't hear them.' He went straight back to sleep. I didn't."

As Herzog discussed the parachute dilemma with Susanna Lenton, his script supervisor—they decided that Bale would spell "SOS" with banana leaves—Lena told me that her husband had gone to Thailand knowing that the producers had failed to raise the requisite funds. "Werner thought that by proceeding ahead he'd put wind in the sails of the project," she said. "But now he's very distressed. Me, too." Unlike Herzog, who felt that he was "not allowed to have emotions" at such an imperilled moment, Lena expressed her anger. The producers were hardly penniless, she said: upon arriving in Thailand, she said, Marlton and other Gibraltar executives had "set up shop at the Oriental"—an expensive hotel in Bangkok. "They're treating everyone like slaves! And they have no respect for Werner." She concluded, "The movie will still be made in spite of them, and if it's destroyed it will be because of them. They're abusive and incompetent. They're not even Hollywood—they're would-be Hollywood!" She paused. "Peter Jackson can *fart* and get a hundred million dollars. Werner is not so lucky."

Herzog came over and put his arm around Lena. "I am trying to stop an avalanche from going down," he explained to me. He has a penchant for jaws-of-death metaphors. "You may be a witness to the beginning of the end. Today, we are once again on the brink—and I must prevent us from falling off."

Herzog was in his element. As he had told me, he knew how to handle "the daily grind of catastrophe" that can beset a film set (or, at least, *his* film sets). On "Fitzcarraldo," he had been forced to start over after his original star, Jason Robards, fell ill. Robards's replacement, Kinski, was incandescent as Fitzcarraldo, but he threw daily fits, frequently refusing to perform. This time, Herzog did not threaten Kinski with a gun, though a local Indian, appalled by the actor's vile manners, offered to murder him. It is impossible to say which was harder: getting Kinski to finish his scenes, or hauling the three-hundred-and-forty-ton steamboat over the mountain, via a creaky system of pulleys. No crew members were killed in the process, Herzog often points out, though the production sustained collateral damage. While the cinematographer was filming on board the steamboat as it bounced over fierce rapids, his hand was smashed open and had to be sewn up without anesthesia. A crew member was bitten by a snake whose venom can quickly induce cardiac arrest; to save himself, he cut off his foot with a chain saw. Another was paralyzed after his plane crashed en route to the isolated location, in northeast Peru. Yet the film betrays no sign of its agonized gestation: the prevailing tone is deliciously languid and dreamy, and Fitzcarraldo's labors evoke the Little Engine as much as Sisyphus.

Herzog told me that he did not expect to be paid for his work on "Rescue Dawn," but he didn't mind. He had suffered worse, he said. And although he was indignant about how his colleagues were being treated, he felt that he had to keep shooting. "I must finish this film," he said.

"You will," Lena said.

Herzog, whose demeanor away from a camera is gentle and warm, thanked her with a flurry of short kisses, calling her "sweetie." Lena, for her part, calls Herzog her "churl"; she is amused by his coarse grooming habits. "Do you know how Werner has been washing his muddy pants here?" she asked me later, in a lighter mood. "At the hotel, he just walks into the shower fully clothed!"

Herzog got ready to film a short scene that takes place the morning after the helicopter sequence. A special-effects crew had hidden a smoke bomb inside one of the burned huts and ignited it. The emerging cloud was feeble.

"I don't see enough smoldering," Herzog said. Before anyone could stop him, he walked inside the hut, grabbed the smoke bomb, and tossed it into a more open spot, where the breeze could nurture the flame.

Herzog turned his attention to the actors. Zahn was told to emerge from the hut in a state of confusion—his character is so worn out that the helicopters did not rouse him. On the first take, Zahn, an adroit performer, limped in too pronounced a manner.

"He looks over-quavery," Herzog said. "Cut. Let's redo it."

In the foreground, Bale sat crumpled on the jungle floor. Zahn walked outside again, more naturally this time, and Bale torpidly said, "We've gotta get out of here, Duane." After a long pause, he added, "This will've attracted the attention of the Vietcong. They could be here any minute."

"Christian, get into the action quicker!" Herzog said. "You had a whole night to think about what happened to you. And what I don't like is your mouth hanging open like this. It's too much. Keep it closed and *think*." He turned to me and explained, "We have this very, very slow emerging of Duane, and there is nothing happening, and the dialogue has the exact same kind of retardation. The scene doesn't yet have a rhythm."

Bale took his notes, and on the third take both performances were substantially improved. "Much better," Herzog said. "Much more resolve, less melodramatic." But Herzog didn't like the way the actors had run off into the underbrush after saying their lines. They were too slow; he wanted to show them vanishing into the leaves, and the sequence had to be precisely timed, for there would be no cuts. They shot the scene again.

"What I'm doing here is very much like music," he told me later. "The rhythm of a movie is *never* established during editing. It's established in the shots you make on location, which need to have their own proper meter." Herzog is contemptuous of movies that achieve surface vitality through manic cross-cutting. In "Herzog on Herzog" (2002), a book of interviews, edited by Paul Cronin, he says, "Poor filmmakers will often move the camera about unnecessarily and use flashy tricks and an excess of cuts because they know their material is not strong enough to sustain a passive camera."

The crew, meanwhile, speculated that there was another reason that Herzog was filming so much of "Rescue Dawn" with long shots and a single camera. Sometimes a producer who is unhappy with a director's cut of a film will seize all his footage and splice together a new version. By shooting scenes in one take, and from one angle, Herzog was protecting his work from editing-room tampering.

Herzog worked particularly quickly that day, filming scenes at three locations. In the evening, he filmed Bale alone in the jungle, huddled beneath a rocky overhang on which a faded gold Buddha was painted. A seven-foot-long banana leaf dangled over the shrine; it was weighed down, on its underside, by a giant gray slug. The trees thrummed with bats. To replace the moon, a small white balloon, embedded with electric bulbs, was inflated with helium. It slowly climbed upward, through the netted palms; when it was hovering above the treetops, the device was turned on. There was an implosive sound as moths and beetles hurtled into the glowing orb, which was soon speckled with the black outlines of ten thousand bugs. Herzog paused to admire the surreal beauty of his Hollywood moon, but only for a moment. On the jungle floor, the light was hardly perceptible, offering only shadowy intimations of the surrounding forest. He walked over to Bale, whose feet were bare and covered with cuts. Pointing to a forbidding knot of foliage, he said, "Next, I want you to run through *that*."

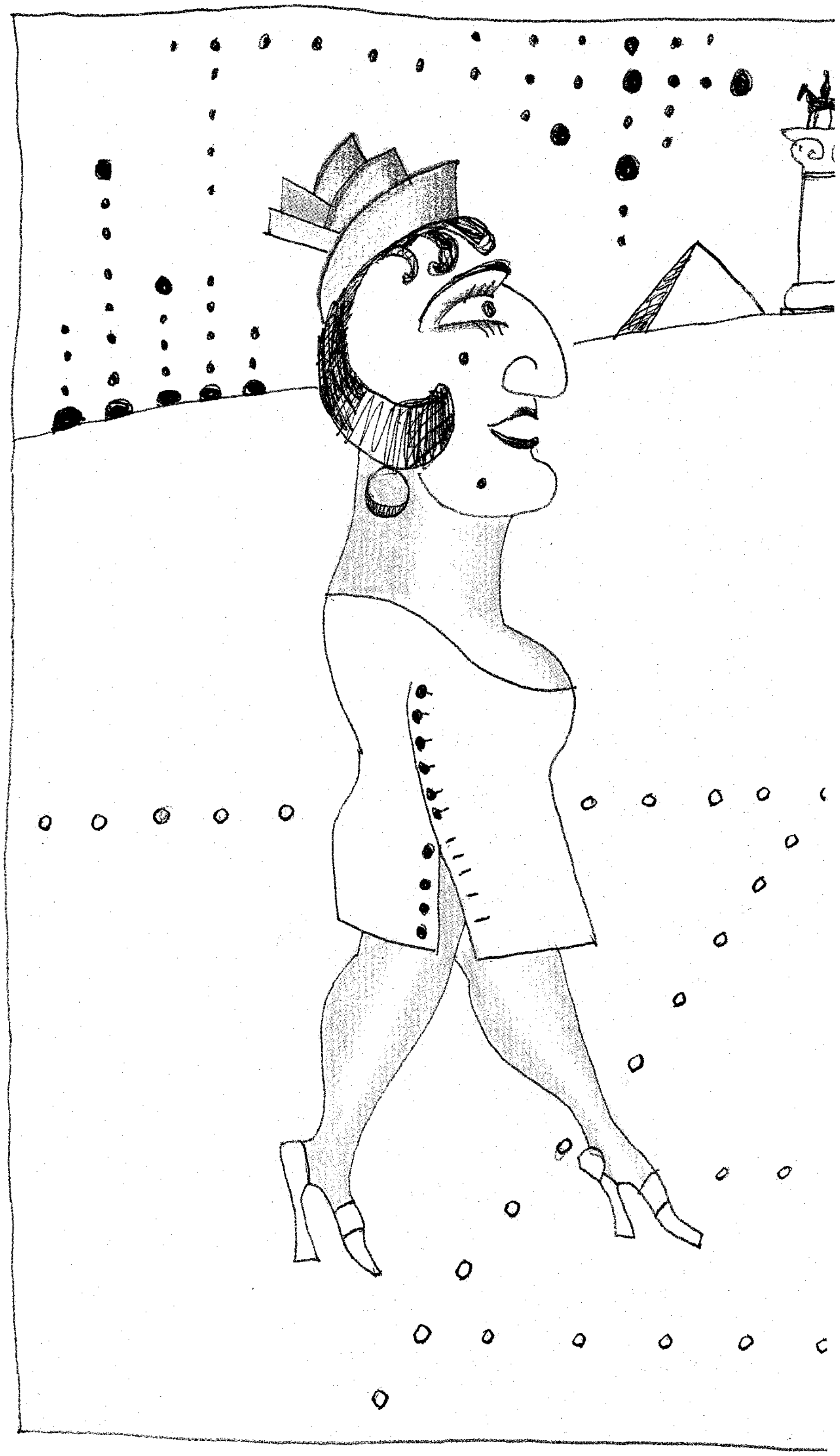
Spending time with Werner Herzog can make you feel as if you were trapped inside one of those postmodern novels of paranoia, in which a series of ominous-seeming events appear to be linked by more than chance. Why has Herzog's career been so consistently plagued by intrigue, peril, and disaster? Is there no overarching explanation for the pattern of catastrophe? "My character has nothing to do with it—it's just statistics, abnormal statistics, even though nobody will believe me," he said during a visit to his home in Los Angeles, a comfortable bungalow in Laurel Canyon. It was hidden from the street by bushes so overgrown that they had knocked over the front fence. "People who do not know me think that I *like* filmmaking to be difficult," he continued. "I do not. And I do not take unnecessary risks."

He added, "I have avoided the undoable things." In the nineteen-nineties, he decided not to pursue a project in Sudan, after enough people told him that he'd get killed in the midst of the ongoing civil war. He also abandoned plans to make a feature film on K2, the Himalayan mountain. The German mountaineer Reinhold Messner—the subject of a 1984 Herzog documentary—assured him that such a shoot would result in numerous fatalities. "There are just too many avalanches," Herzog explained, with a wistful shrug.

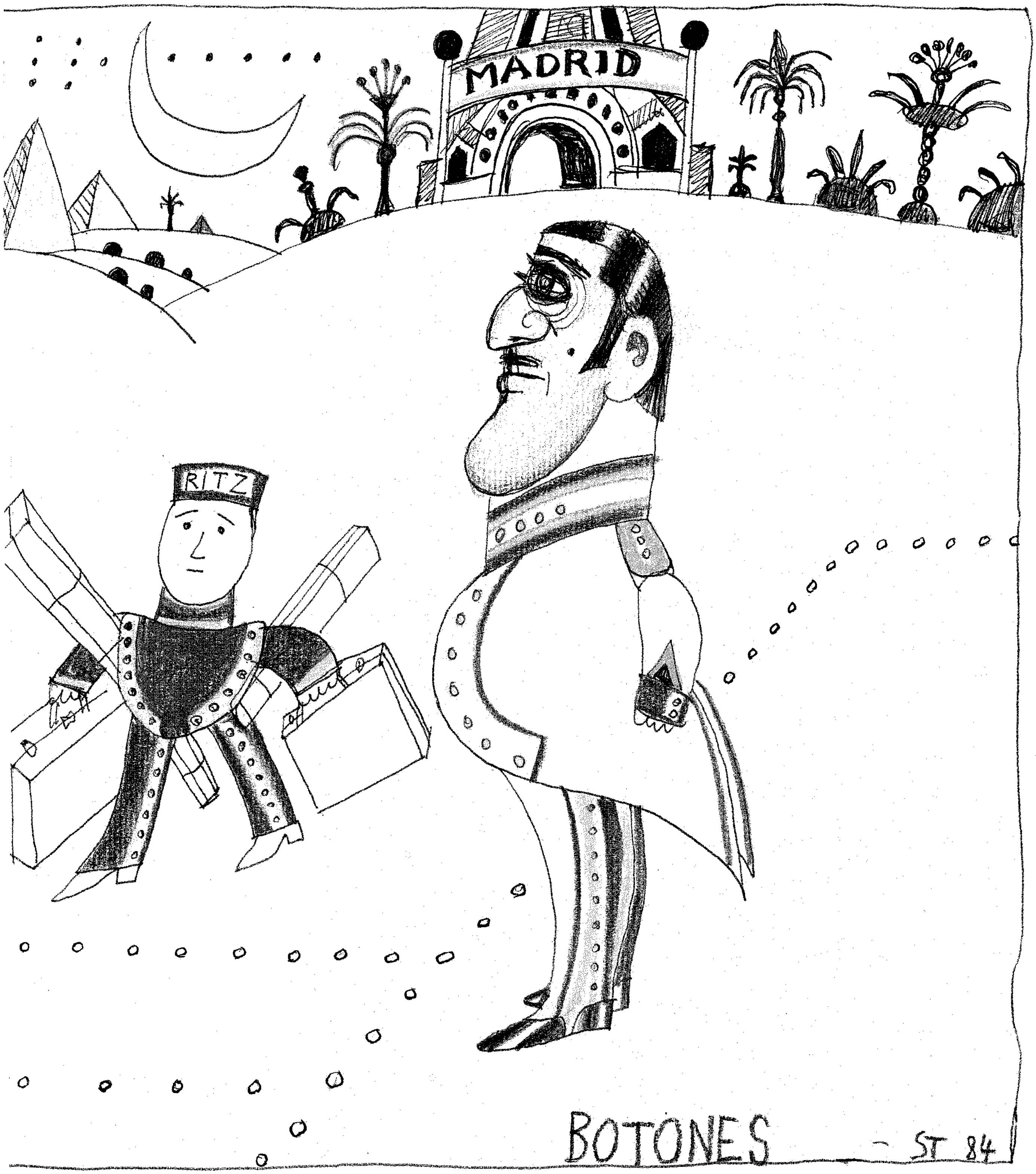
"Now, I admit, I do not have a *perfectly* clean record," he said. "I did climb La Soufrière when it was in danger of erupting." In 1977, he shot documentary footage from the lip of the volcano, which is on Guadeloupe, while it was regularly spewing toxic fumes. He emphasized, however, that he wasn't driven by a desire to tempt fate: "What I had heard was that there was one man who had refused to evacuate. *That* is what fascinated me—to explore a human being whose view of death is so different, who does something inexplicable." In the end, La Soufrière never blew up, baffling geologists. "I loved that," he recalled, laughing. "It made my whole project wonderfully embarrassing." The documentary ends in wry voice-over: he pronounces his film "pathetic," a "report on an inevitable catastrophe that did not take place." (For all his moments of self-seriousness, Herzog enjoys poking fun at his manly escapades; a memoir about the making of "Fitzcarraldo," which was recently published in German, is titled "Conquest of the Useless.")

Herzog was sitting in his living room, a skylit space lined with books. On one shelf, near a copy of Martin Luther's Bible, is a framed photograph of his youngest child, Simon, standing next to a very large boa constrictor in the Amazon. (Simon, then nine, is now sixteen; Herzog's older son, Rudolph, a magician and filmmaker, is thirty-four; his daugh-

## SKETCHBOOK BY SAUL STEINBERG



SAUL STEINBERG, "BOTONES," 1984 © THE SAUL STEINBERG FOUNDATION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ter, Hanna, an art student in Amsterdam, is twenty-five.) Herzog took the picture himself, during the filming of a 2000 documentary, “Wings of Hope,” about Juliane Koepcke, a female counterpart to Dieter Dengler; in 1971, as a teen-ager, she survived a jetliner crash in Peru and made it out of the jungle alone. Simon was his “co-combatant” in the jungle, Herzog recalled fondly. “He found some airplane parts that had been completely covered up by the forest.” At one point, he said, Simon got very sick—“from food poisoning or something, it was never clear”—but he “had a great time.”

In the center of Herzog’s living room is a vintage Deardorff camera, set up on a tripod. He stole his first movie camera, he told me, when he was a student at the University of Munich, in the early sixties. Herzog’s directorial career was tumultuous from the start. His first full-length feature, “Signs of Life”—a satirical precursor of “Aguirre,” in which a German paratrooper becomes unhinged while stationed in the Aegean—was nearly upended because of what Herzog calls “a confrontation with the Greek military.” He said, “It was 1967. Three weeks after we started shooting in Greece, on Kos, there was a coup d’état in Athens, and the new regime didn’t like the tone of my script.” His shooting permits were revoked. Herzog told a local Army officer that he would continue filming illegally, issuing a threat worthy of Pushkin. “I will not be unarmed tomorrow,” he said, and the first officer who touched him, he promised, would be shot dead. It was a ruse, and it worked: soldiers hovered but did not interfere. “After all this, my lead actor fell six feet or so and fractured his heel bone,” he continued. “The production was shut down for six months. Six feet, six months! It was as if I somehow attracted bad luck.” Herzog can always point to some external force to explain his calamities. “When I was shooting ‘Fitzcarraldo,’ did I cause the drought that left the boat stuck on the mountaintop for months?” he asked me. “Did I invent that coup d’état in Greece?” Perhaps not, but in 1970, while making “Fata Morgana,” a fantasia on scorched African landscapes, Herzog went to Cameroon a few weeks *after* a coup attempt took place. The police arrested him, Herzog says, after misidentifying a crew member as a wanted criminal. He and several crew members were beaten and thrown into a cell with “sixty other men.” Herzog contracted bilharzia, a blood parasite.

Herzog does push his luck: he worked with Kinski five times, until, Herzog said, the actor went “bonkers” while filming “Cobra Verde,” the story of a Brazilian bandit; one day, Kinski placed a rock in his fist and attacked him. Kinski’s crazed state is distractingly palpable in the film, which was released in 1987. (Kinski died in 1991; Herzog’s double-edged documentary about their relationship, “My Best Fiend,” appeared in 1999.) Herzog’s recklessness may also explain his decision to jump off a ramp and into a bed of cacti in the Canary Islands, while on the set of his second full-length film, “Even Dwarfs Started Small” (1970)—a memorably perverse spoof of Marxism, starring insurrectionary little people and defecating camels. (The film had a big influence on David Lynch.) Herzog insists that the jump was merely a goof—a way of bonding with his actors, some of whom had injured themselves while filming. The consequences were severe, though: spikes remained embedded in the sinews of Herzog’s knee for more than a year, he said. In a similarly larksome spirit, Herzog swore to his friend Errol Morris—then a young man, now a preëminent creator of documentaries, including “The Fog of War”—that he’d offer a singular tribute if Morris, a habitual procrastinator, ever finished his first film. In 1979, Morris did so, and a short documentary by Les Blank, “Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe,” immortalizes the stunt: the boot was leather, the chef was Alice Waters, and the key ingredient was duck fat. A true Bavarian, Herzog told me, can’t resist a spirited wager.

Herzog was born in Munich, the capital of Bavaria, in 1942. The disaster of Nazism, he said, informs his brooding world view. “I try to understand the ocean beneath the thin layer of ice that is civilization,” he said. “There’s miles and miles of deep ocean, of darkness and barbarism. And I know the ice can break easily.” When he was a few days old, he says, he was nearly killed after Allied bombs caused a skylight in his nursery to shatter; the shards fell around his bassinet but somehow did not injure him. (The image seems suspiciously apt—Chapter 1 in a life story defined by near-misses—but he insists that his mother, Elisabeth, “talked about this many times.”) Elisabeth, a biologist, feared more bombs, and she moved the family to Sachrang, a remote village near the Austrian border. His father, Dietrich, also a biologist, was conscripted into the German Army, and eventually abandoned the family. Herzog does not like to speak of him.

Herzog adored his mother, who died in the nineteen-eighties. Elisabeth was “very courageous,” he said. “She raised three boys on her own, in desperate circumstances.” They had no money for mattresses, so she made pallets by stuffing linen sacks with dried ferns. When Herzog developed a fascination with guns after discovering an old cache of Nazi weapons in the forest, she demonstrated how to shoot a pistol. She understood his impatience with traditional schoolwork—as a teen-ager, Herzog, an enthusiast for American matinée fare such as “Dr. Fu Manchu” and “Zorro,” had already begun writing screenplays—and secured him an apprenticeship at a photographer’s lab, in Munich. Later, she gave a German newspaper a quote that Herzog considers the most precise summation of his talent. “Everything goes into him,” she said. “If it comes out, it comes out transformed.” Herzog remains close to his siblings: Tilbert, his older brother, an international-finance executive, who now spends much of his time on a yacht off Spain; Lucki, his younger brother, who lives in Germany, and has produced many of Herzog’s films; and Sigrid, his sister, an acting teacher, who also lives in Germany.

Herzog recalls his childhood with a curiously anthropological cast, as if he were the Alpine equivalent of a Trobriand Islander. He loves to say that he never made a phone call until he was seventeen, did not see a banana until he was twelve, and did not watch a movie until he was eleven. The film was a documentary about Eskimos, shown at school; Herzog was appalled by their inept igloo-construction technique. Like many children in Sachrang, he played winter sports and wanted to be a champion ski jumper. He gave up the sport, however, when his best friend fractured his skull while they were practicing alone on an isolated ramp. "I thought that if I moved him an inch, his brain would spill out, he was so badly injured," he recalled. In 1973, Herzog made a documentary about the sport, "The Great Ecstasy of the Wood-Carver Steiner": in it, he clips off the landings from his slow-motion footage, creating an uncanny sensation of human flight.

Growing up in Sachrang, Herzog developed a passion for wandering; as he grew older, he sometimes roamed so far that he had to spend the night in an empty chalet. (He says he's great at picking locks.) In the "Minnesota Declaration," a whimsical manifesto that he presented at a Minneapolis film festival seven years ago, he says, "Tourism is sin, walking on foot virtue." Herzog believes that modern life has disconnected humans from their most elemental pleasures. His films, accordingly, attempt to connect modern cinemagoers to their prelapsarian selves: the emotions are always primal, and landscape is integral to the drama. "You will never see people talking on the phone, driving in a car, or exchanging ironic jokes in my films," he said. "It is always bigger, deeper." He avows that his films expose "the ecstatic truth" of mankind.

He is gently messianic in his anachronistic habits. In 1974, upon hearing that the film critic Lotte Eisner, a friend, had fallen gravely ill in France, he walked from Munich to Paris to visit her. (She survived the three weeks that it took him to get there—and lived nine more years besides.) Four years later, he published "Of Walking in Ice," a celebration of his travail. As always, he is an astute observer—crossing a field, his feet "immediately collect pounds of heavy sticky clods of earth"—yet the book feels overwrought and musty. ("A cornfield in winter," he intones, "is a field called Death.") Tilbert has said that his brother "will openly declare that he writes the best prose since Kleist," but cinema serves Herzog better: it forces his Romantic sensibilities into a modern frame.

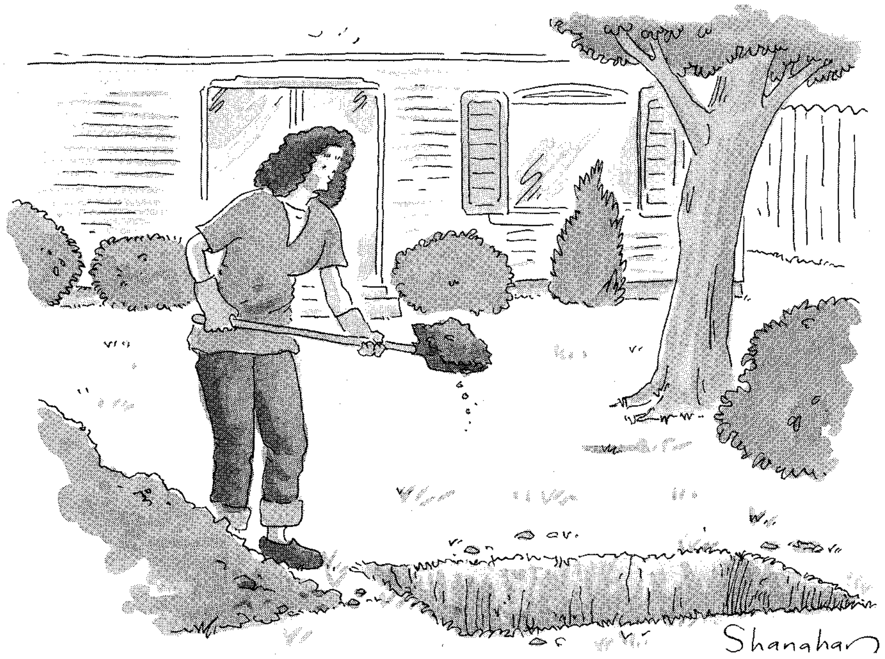
Things rarely turn out well when the swashbuckling side of Herzog takes over. Several years ago, he returned to the Alps to ski with some old friends. One day, he sped down a notoriously treacherous run; when he boasted about it that night, nobody believed him. The next day, he insisted on doing it again—and, predictably, he wiped out. "I nearly died," he told me, and he still has difficulty turning his neck.

Why does he *do* such things? Herzog does not want to know the answer. "I think that psychoanalysis is one of the great evils of civilization, even worse than the Spanish Inquisition," he told me. "At least the Inquisition was about keeping something together. Analysis is only about taking a person apart. I would rather die than see an analyst."

Herzog's accidents and misfortunes have been widely catalogued, yet a complete concordance seems impossible: that afternoon in Los Angeles, he revealed that he once jumped out of a third-floor window in Pittsburgh—no fire, just fooling around!—and recalled that, during a recent visit to Spain, Tilbert had, on a lark, set his shirt on fire with a cigar. (He was saved "by a pitcher of lemonade," he added triumphantly.) Not surprisingly, Herzog has been accused of being a serial fabulist. He hasn't helped matters by admitting that he "intensifies" his documentaries. "Lessons of Darkness," his spectral 1992 film about the apocalyptic fires that raged after the Gulf War, begins with a bogus epigraph, allegedly by Pascal: "The collapse of the stellar universe will occur—like creation—in grandiose splendor." (The "pseudo-quote," he has said, elevates the film from "mere reportage" to "the realm of poetry.") He frequently supplies his subjects with dialogue. In "The White Diamond," which came out last year, a Guyanese villager, interviewed on the edge of a clamorous waterfall, establishes his mystical temperament when he says to the camera, "I cannot hear what you say for the thunder that you are." Herzog swiped the line from "Cobra Verde."

Herzog says that he "stylizes" his documentaries only when the subject agrees that an invention aptly illuminates his character. "Grizzly Man," which was made after the death of Timothy Treadwell, contains no fictions, he said, for "there was no possibility of collaboration." Yet Herzog's insistence that there is no meaningful difference between his features and his documentaries—"In both cases, I am a storyteller," he likes to say—offends advocates of cinéma vérité and probably explains why "Grizzly Man," despite receiving terrific reviews, was snubbed by the Academy Awards. Herzog, of course, relishes tweaking the traditionalists. "There is just a very shallow truth in facts," he told me. "Otherwise, the phone directory would be the Book of Books."

Such proclamations notwithstanding, Herzog's personal stories usually check out, allowing for some measure of exag-



*"Happy Earth Day, honey."*

*"They lead a simple life—they don't even put gas in their cars."*

• •

other shore, sixty feet away, poised to film a sequence with Dengler's homemade raft: the two escapees discover, nearly too late, that they're headed for a waterfall. Herzog didn't like the pretty way that the production assistants had laurelled Zahn with vines, as if he were the Athlete Dying Young.

Lena joked, "I wonder sometimes if it's strange that I've gotten used to it: 'Oh, there's Werner standing in the middle of the river. Just another day at the office!' " She was concerned, however, about an infection that had developed in Herzog's left toe. He had refused her repeated offers of a bandage. A week or so later, the toenail fell off, and Herzog began covering it—with yellow duct tape.

Herzog looked a bit unsteady in the water, which reached the belt on his khakis. As he stretched his arms out for balance, Lena informed me that her husband was unusually low on energy that day. In what Herzog called a "signal of solidarity," he was dieting with Bale and Zahn. (By the end of the shoot, in October, he had lost almost thirty pounds.) It was an ethic for Herzog: anything he asked the actors to do, he volunteered to do as well, including eating maggots and handling snakes. If he established a raw, physical mood on the set, Herzog believed, Bale and Zahn wouldn't feel self-conscious. The crew members, by and large, saw this credo less generously. Herzog, they felt, was unwilling to accept the fundamental paradox of filmmaking: creating a gripping movie often requires weeks of boredom. In their view, Herzog was intent on undergoing his own survivalist drama. A half-dozen crew members shared a jest that Zeitlinger had made: "Werner's not really a filmmaker. He's a little boy."

Zeitlinger was kneeling by the river's edge, his linen trousers still improbably white. He chuckled when he was asked about the remark, but added that he was just being silly; he has worked on eight Herzog films, and he said that a consistent aesthetic guided the director's method. "When I was just a viewer of Werner's feature films, I was always wondering why they are so imperfect, why so often things do not mesh together, and you see things that you usually try to avoid," he said. "Now I under-

geration. (Tilbert confirmed the lemonade incident.) As if by design, Herzog's life is overstuffed with drama. Weird things happen to him even when he's at home in California. One day this February, he left a voice message. "I have something amusing to tell you," he said, teasingly. When I called him back, he announced, "I was shot today!"

He tore into his latest tale: "A BBC television crew came to see me in Laurel Canyon. They wanted to interview me for the British première of 'Grizzly Man.' I didn't want them to film right outside my house, so we went up to Skyline Drive. In the middle of the interview, I was shot with a rifle by someone standing on his balcony. I seem to attract the clinically insane." A *rifle*? "Well, it must have been an air rifle or something. I was very slightly injured; it was a very small-calibre thing, I suppose. Also, I had a catalogue in my jacket pocket, which protected me. The bullet hit my abdomen, right next to the belt, but it did not penetrate into my intestines. I thought the camera had cracked and burned me. I flinched for less than a second and continued my thoughts, and the BBC people started to duck and run away. I was bleeding into my underwear! Quite often, I have the feeling that when I tell about some strange incident, people don't believe me. But here it is, documented on camera. Proof!"

Two days later, an article appeared in the Los Angeles *Times*. The actor Joaquin Phoenix had flipped his car on a drive down the serpentine roads of Laurel Canyon. "I remember this knocking on the passenger window," Phoenix told the *Times*. "There was this German voice saying, 'Just relax.' . . . I said to myself, 'That's Werner Herzog!' " Phoenix, who was unharmed, went on, "I got out of the car and I said, 'Thank you.' And he was gone."

One afternoon in Thailand, Herzog sat with his wife on a slab of granite that jutted into a swift, rock-crowded river. "Sweetie, I have to do some wading," Herzog said, patting Lena's knee in farewell. Mercifully, it was a cloud-filled day: Herzog and Peter Zeitlinger, his cinematographer, had taken to calling the Thai sun *die gelbe Sau*—"the yellow swine." Bale and Zahn stood on the stand; he doesn't *want* to have it this way—perfect. He wouldn't care if, in a single scene, there was sun and then not sun! This is the only thing I try to maintain, for this would disturb even this documentary reality. Any other mistake, I don't care. He wants to have it imperfect so that it gets a kick of *feeling* like a documentary—that you somehow couldn't manage to film it better. It makes everything onscreen seem real." He did sometimes find Herzog's approach perplexing. Though Herzog had spent his life making movies, he said, "he cannot accept the illusion of filmmaking."

Zeitlinger peered into an Austrian tripod camera that he had set up on the shore. It was connected to a digital monitor. "It's hard to know how everything really looks when you're focussed on keeping a moving raft in frame," he said.

A crew member glanced at the monitor and shook his head. "Werner doesn't want to use it," he reported.

"Oh, just cover it with a banana leaf," Susanna Lenton, the script supervisor, suggested. "Werner will never notice it." Within seconds, the monitor was camouflaged—a trick that would be repeated often during the shoot. Harry Knapp, who replaced Josef Lieck as first assistant director, developed various ruses to distract Herzog, in order to take footage that he deemed unnecessary. ("Look at these wild mimosa plants, Werner . . .") Knapp, an athletic-looking man who wore baseball caps and frequently called himself the "film-school guy" and Herzog "the famous guy," said that, before long, even the actors were in on the game. More than once, Herzog figured out what was going on and stood directly in front of the second unit's camera, to ruin a shot. "You're blocking the audience," Knapp would say. Later, Knapp told me that ten per cent of the footage that Herzog would view in the editing room—closeups, backup takes, establishing shots—had been filmed on the sly.

Herzog arrived at the other side of the river and grabbed a few vines from a production assistant, tossing them pell-mell over Zahn's prone body; he then stuck his dripping fingers in his mouth, emitting a startlingly loud whistle. "I need some more vines!" he bellowed.

A few minutes later, he was helping the stunt crew guide the raft to various starting positions. The first takes were frustrating: parts of the river were shallow, and rocks kept impeding the raft's forward motion. Bale and Zahn looked like Kinski in the final shot of "Aguirre"—trapped on a river that appears to have stopped flowing. Herzog and the stunt people tromped around the riverbed until they found a deeper path for the raft to follow. Some crew members worried that the sequence would still look slow on film, but Herzog was content. "I don't want the river to be flowing extremely fast here," he explained. "I want a buildup that surges to a thunderous climax, as in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony."

Bale and Zahn were dispatched downriver from the new starting point, and the sequence worked better. "Perfect," Herzog said. He waved his hands at Zeitlinger. Herzog was now going to shoot some closeup footage while flowing downstream with the actors. He stripped off his shirt and tossed it on the riverbank. His right deltoid had a faded black tattoo of a smiling skull. "It's 'Singing Death,' " Lena explained.

"What are you *doing*, Werner? Werner?" Bale cried. Bale is as polite as Kinski was rude, but fissures were developing. One afternoon, Dengler's helicopter rescue was being filmed, and, during the setup, Herzog, immersed in the excitement of blocking the climactic scene, dismissed Knapp's concern that Bale could be hit by a heavy winch while being lifted inside the aircraft. "I am not going to feckin' *die* for you, Werner!" Bale exploded, his native Welsh accent emerging for the first time on the set. "You got that?" (Herzog apologized, and Bale was gracious. "It's O.K.," he said. "I didn't sign up for a cakewalk.")

Zeitlinger turned off the tripod camera and prepared to join Herzog. "We have a camera that's protected inside a Lucite box, which allows you to place it right in the water," he said. "So he could get the shot without any physical contact. But that's not what he wants. He wants an adventure." Zeitlinger had developed a severe cough, and he took a swig of an opium-infused Thai elixir, ominously labelled "BROWN MIXTURE." He then attached a large Styrofoam flotation device to his bottom and waded over to Herzog, his loose outfit ballooning portentously, in the manner of a Pre-Raphaelite Ophelia. The two men attached themselves to a rope that had been suspended in the water, parallel to the shore; they would hook themselves on to the rope and head downriver with the Lucite-covered camera, alongside the raft.

Knapp, who kept muttering to other crew members on his black headset, was annoyed by the spectacle. "There's an easier way to shoot this," he said, adding sarcastically, "He has this concept of the camera being 'part' of the characters."

Lena could sense the contrary mood on the set. "Werner is always the only one who believes in the dancing chicken," she said. "The whole crew disagrees, it goes in anyway, and then in the movie it makes perfect sense." She was referring to the surpassingly strange ending of "Stroszek," a mordant 1977 film about a hapless East German who, upon being kicked out of a mental institution, immigrates to America with a prostitute. The naïve Stroszek fails to get a foothold in America—even his mobile home is repossessed—and, in a bathetic parody of gangster epics like "Bonnie and Clyde," he becomes the feeblest of outlaws, robbing a barber at gunpoint and stealing a turkey from a supermarket. Pursued by police, he escapes to an empty amusement hall, where he drops coins in a glass cage containing a live chicken; colored lights start blinking furiously, causing the bird to skitter back and forth. Stroszek leaves with his gun, presumably to kill himself, but Herzog returns the viewer to the cage. The film ends with a mercilessly long shot of the horrifying, hilarious chicken. The metaphor may be ham-handed—Stroszek is a helpless creature trapped by capitalism!—but because the surreal image comes out of nowhere and remains obdurately fixed to the screen, it sticks in the viewer's brain, giving the picture the afterglow of a fever dream. The crew on "Stroszek" hated Herzog's chicken idea—"They said it was total *shit*," he recalled—and some refused to come to the set that day. He now considers the sequence one of the strongest he has ever shot.

From the riverbank, it was hard to see if Zeitlinger was capturing anything worthwhile: the camera sloshed up and down like a rubber duck in a toddler's tub. The scene called to mind something that Lieck had said the morning that he quit. "I have formed this theory that Werner has, probably from mid-puberty, been trying very hard to die a grand, poetic death," he told me. "Whenever there is anything dangerous, you can be sure he'll run out to do it first. But I think he will have his grand, poetic death in a different way. I think he will live to be a hundred and five. He'll have tried all his life to get chopped to pieces or fall from a helicopter, and, in the end, he will die on his pillowcase."

After half an hour, Herzog and his crew dragged themselves out of the water. The director was in a merry mood. He displayed his hands and observed, "My fingers look like those of somebody who just died of asphyxiation." He then offered a vivid recap: "The first take was comically disastrous. The water was strong, and Peter's camera wobbled uncontrollably and teetered over. I was behind him and helped him to reorient himself, but it was too late. We capsized together." Subsequent takes were better, he said, adding, "There may be a couple of good moments in the end." Herzog later told me that, while filming "Fitzcarraldo," he had woken up before sunrise for twelve days in a row, hoping to lure a fish into swallowing a wad of cash that he dropped into the water. "Finally, we got one to do it," he said. "All for a five-second image."

After Zeitlinger dried off, he offered his own account of the shoot. "Werner kept holding on to me so he would not be swept away," he said. "I was trying to get rid of him, and I knocked the camera over."

As the "Rescue Dawn" shoot neared its end, Herzog sent notes via e-mail; they were invariably stippled with words like "brink," "precipice," and "abyss." Crew members confirmed that the set had grown increasingly troubled. Chris Carnel, the stuntman who had injured his ribs, burned his face in a scene depicting Dengler's plane crash. Although American and British crew members were finally given money, many said that they had not been paid all they were promised, and the producers evidently infuriated Thai contractors by ignoring bills. The entire production crew got turned away from a hotel in Krabi, after the proprietors got wind of these complaints. (Steve Marlton claims that the hotel had suddenly raised its rates, and that all other bills had been paid.) An accountant arrived on the set, then immediately quit, shocked by the financial mess. Midway through the shoot, thirty Thai crew members quit en masse, citing the production's "cash-flow problems." (Marlton says of those who resigned, "They had the gall to tell me that I needed to put a million dollars in a Thai bank that they could withdraw from. I told them to get fucked and they walked.")

Meanwhile, Harry Knapp, who said that he considers Herzog "a poet," became the liaison between the director and the producers. When Herzog resisted shooting multiple angles of one scene, he warned him, "When we have to change the film because of audience notes, you won't have the footage to do it." Once, Knapp refused Herzog's request to return to a remote location, in order to capture a single elusive image of a fish. (In the scene, Dengler is hallucinating with hunger.) "If we lose this detail, it will *never matter*," Knapp told him. "This does not move the story forward." Late in the shoot, Herzog grew hostile. Although his script had described, among other things, Dengler's nails being jammed with razor-sharp bamboo, Herzog sensed that the producers were overly keen on such "Rambo"-style luridness; he refused to shoot any scenes of torture. Knapp felt that Herzog needed to respect his screenplay. After a "blowout fight," Knapp recalled, Herzog gave in, though he kept the moments of violence short.

A few days before shooting was scheduled to end, Thailand's governor of tourism revoked the production's work permits. Marlton had refused to pay the fee demanded by a contractor that had arranged the rental of military equipment and provided the local crew, claiming that he was being overcharged. In retaliation, the contractor had successfully petitioned the government to close the shoot. Over the next few days, Marlton and eight crew members were prevented from boarding planes at the Bangkok airport. Marlton was informed by the Thai police that he would be allowed to leave only if he paid five hundred thousand dollars in taxes that the production supposedly owed. Herzog, however, eluded capture: "I had two valid passports, and juggled them at a critical moment," he told me.

Marlton paid a substantial sum and flew home, leaving the other crew members behind. After a weeklong standoff, Gibraltar agreed to pay Thai authorities more money, and the others were allowed to go home. In an e-mail, Marlton said that he had been "squeezed" by the Thai police. He added, "At first, I was appalled, angry, and defiant, but I succumbed to their system." Soon afterward, Knapp was arrested in Bangkok, on the ground that "Rescue Dawn" had violated work-permit regulations; he spent eight hours in a detention center, and criminal charges were filed against him. Marlton posted his bail, but Knapp still faces legal proceedings.

Meanwhile, "Rescue Dawn" remained in a precarious state. In November, Herzog spent two days in Alameda, California, shooting the final scenes. He then asked for ten weeks to edit the film. He would present his cut, and the producers would decide whether to release it or demand changes. On the second day of editing, Herzog was kicked out of his small editing suite, in West Hollywood. The editing studio required payment up front, and Gibraltar didn't have the money on hand.

In April, Gibraltar secured post-production money, and Herzog was finally paid the director's fee he had been promised. Herzog resumed editing, and he was joined by Knapp. Although Knapp said that "Rescue Dawn" was "Herzog's movie" and that his primary role was to "lend support," he would also remind Herzog that certain choices—such as trimming action sequences in favor of dialogue-heavy scenes in the prison camp—would likely displease the producers.

Herzog was cautiously optimistic. He had realized too late that, as he told me, the producers "would have rather put me out of the project if they could have." But he wasn't altogether naïve about Hollywood politics. He reminded me that the powerful Endeavor Agency, which represents Bale and Zahn, was on his side. "Christian wants a quality film, not an action movie," he said. "And the agency wants their client to be happy." Endeavor, he implied, could make life difficult for Gibraltar if it tried to release a bastardized version of "Rescue Dawn."

He also was heartened by what he had seen in his brief visit to the editing suite. His footage was "very, very strong," he said. Sifting through his reels on the computer, he had immediately spotted and dismissed various second-unit takes—such as a shot of Bale screaming in slo-mo despair, while gunfire blasts around him, as in "Platoon." Much of the remaining footage had the bracing, off-rhythm feel of a Herzog film. In a scene in which Bale appears to eat a live snake, a single-take shot made clear that the emaciated actor had struggled heartily with a writhing beast. The sequence shot in the river was excitingly disorienting, bobbing the viewer up and down. Shots of the Thai jungle felt palpably constrictive—at one point, Bale and Zahn, after clambering up a steep hill, get their first glimpse of a wider view. The vista before them, partially obscured by branches, is an Edenic blanket of green, but the effect is deflating: this prison cannot be escaped.

The sequence was shot the day after the decapitation scene. Herzog had discovered that there was nothing pending on the shooting schedule, and he seized the chance to flee the Apparatus. He got in a silver van with his wife, Bale, Zahn, Zeitlinger, and a camera assistant. The van's driver had decorated his vehicle in an weirdly apt style: its exterior and interior were plastered with Batman logos.

Herzog told the driver to start driving "toward Burma." The driver, looking a bit unsure, set off down the highway. The sound engineer and a few Thai crewhands followed in a small car. Herzog had explored the border area earlier in the summer, and he had pinpointed a splendid spot to shoot the vista scene. He hadn't, of course, marked it on a map. "I am just following my own geographic instincts," he explained.

An hour and a half later, Herzog still had not found his spot. We passed steep hills terraced with corn plants. Nobody commented on the cheery rainbows glowing over the misty valleys; in a Herzogian world, rainbows would not exist.

At one point, Bale asked quietly, "Werner, does the driver speak English?"

"No," Herzog said, unperturbed.

"He has a G.P.S. in his head," Zeitlinger whispered to me. "Do not worry."

Herzog was savoring the hunt. He propped his muddy bare feet on the bench where Bale was sitting, put on some mirrored glasses, and stared out the window, studying the landscape. We drove for two hours more, looking for Herzog's vista. The sun was getting low. "We just need a little bit of luck," Herzog said with excitement. "I think that ten minutes away there is a spot where we may have some luck."

Half an hour before sundown, a towering escarpment came into view. "Here," Herzog said. The Batvan stopped, and Herzog began walking up a side approach to the summit. "We must go quickly," he urged, disappearing in the trees.

The crest was densely forested, but there was a thin opening that showed a ribbon of mountains receding into the distance. Herzog began giving instructions to Bale and Zahn, who, exhausted from the climb, listened in silence. "A storm is coming," Herzog observed, pointing toward distant clouds. "There is no time to waste."

Zeitlinger wanted to set up a tracking shot; the faraway terrain might look blurry in an unsteady handheld shot. Herzog humored him for a few minutes, until he noticed a mountain that was backlit with a penumbra of golden light. "It's a high-intensity landscape," he said. "We must do it *now*." The dolly track was left unfinished.

The sound engineer hadn't yet carted up his heavy equipment. "We will dub it in later," he said. "These conditions will last for five minutes at most."

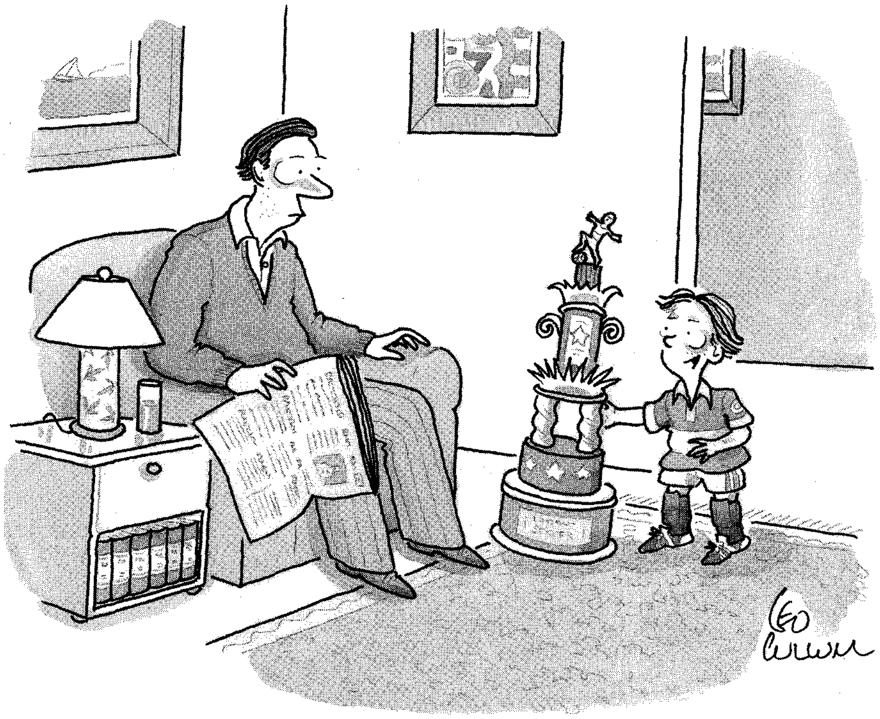
"It's sublime," Lena said, while taking photographs. "It's very Caspar Friedrich."

Bale and Zahn walked fifty feet down the hill, hiked up again, and said a few lines that Herzog improvised.

"I'm going to get you out of here, Duane," Bale said to Zahn. Then they stared out at the impossibly vast view, and their faces crumpled.

"Have the camera *plow* past them, through the trees, and into the distance," Herzog told Zeitlinger.

At the end of several takes, Herzog cried, "Cut!" He smeared the sweat off his brow with his arm. He grabbed Zeitlinger's shoulder, and pointed to the dark horizon. "Thank God, I forced it," he said. "Look. The glowing mountain is gone." ♦



"We lost!"

## AMERICAN CHRONICLES

# WHAT HAPPENED AT ALDER CREEK?

*Excavating the Donner Party.*

### BY DANA GOODYEAR

Kelly Dixon, a thirty-five-year-old professor at the University of Montana in Missoula, describes herself as an archeologist of the West. A wooden plaque with six styles of nineteenth-century barbed wire nailed to it hangs on her office wall; her shelves are crammed with books like "Antique Western Bitters Bottles," "The Glass Glossary," and the 1897 Sears, Roebuck catalogue, and treatises on windmills, barns, and human bones. She works exclusively on sites in the historical period—in the United States, that means the past five hundred years—and has spent a lot of time in ghost towns. In Virginia City, Nevada, a gold-and-silver boomtown on the Comstock lode, she dug the buried remains of the Boston Saloon, the first African-American bar in the Old West to be excavated. Contrary to popular notions of Western saloons as raucous places for brawls and shootouts—and of black establishments as dives—the Boston Saloon, she discovered, served the finest cuts of meat, used crystal stemware, and offered live music and games. The fragments she uncovered, she wrote in a book on the subject, helped tell "a more complex and vivid Western story."

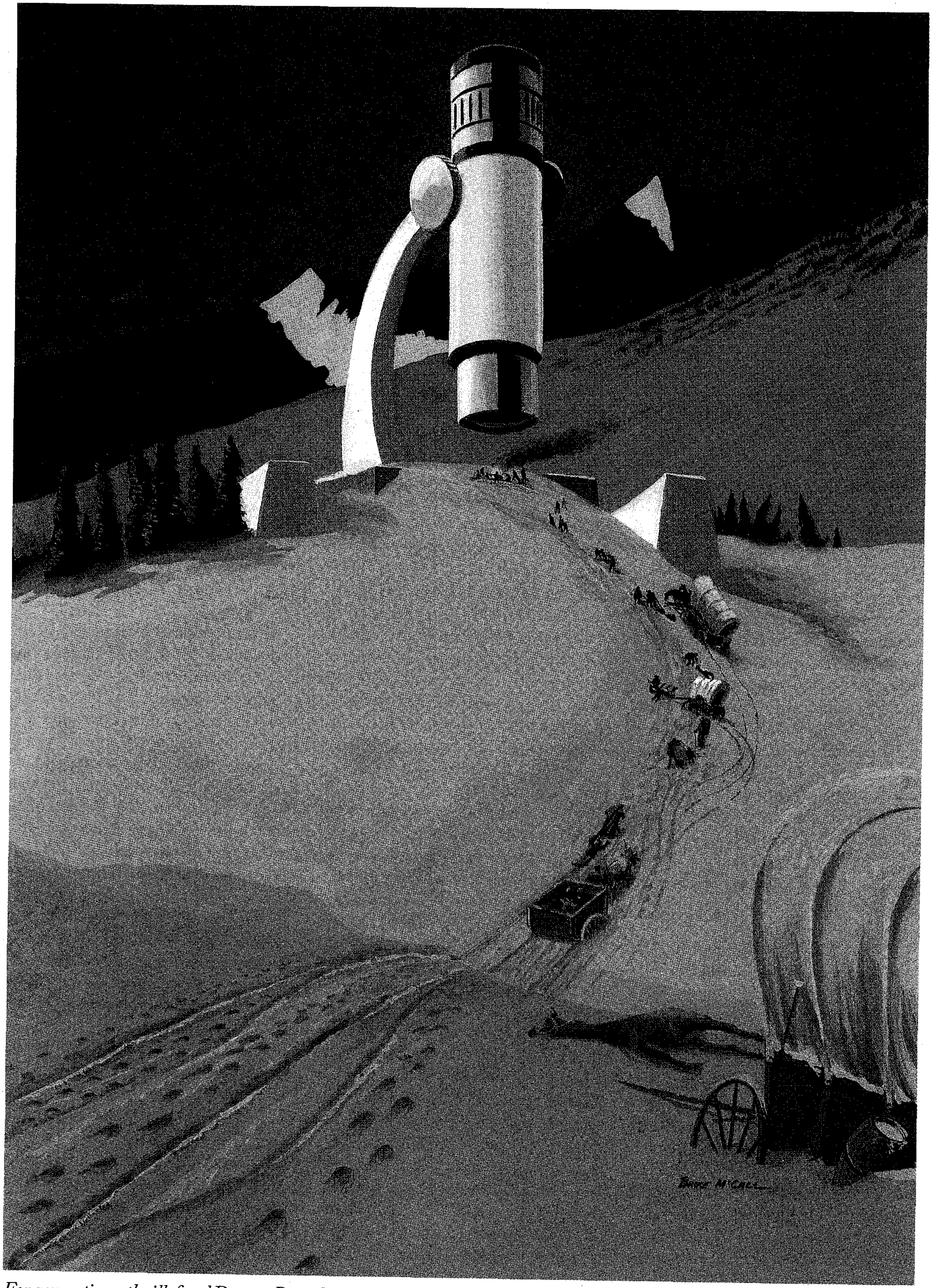
In Virginia City, Dixon, who is tall and patient, with a husky voice and hair that is the white-blond color of corn silk, encountered another young archeologist, Julie Schablitsky, whom she had met some years earlier. Schablitsky—excitable, dark-eyed, quick—was conducting her own dig, a few blocks away, and had managed to extract four distinct strands of DNA from the copper needles of a hundred-and-thirty-five-year-old syringe, which she thinks was used, perhaps in a brothel-like setting, for the recreational injection of morphine. Her finding, which, she says, was the first example of DNA being recovered from an inanimate object in an archeological context, inspired Dixon to try to do the same. Dixon retrieved DNA from a clench mark on a pipe stem found in the Boston Saloon; it turned out to belong to a woman. The two archeologists decided to team up on their next dig. Schablitsky had been considering the O.K. Corral. Then someone suggested a site that engaged even more directly with the high drama of Western settlement: the Donner Family Camp, in the Sierra Nevada, near Truckee, California.

A scandal in its day, the saga of the Donner Party—a group of emigrants snowbound in the mountains during the winter of 1846-47—remains notorious for its association with cannibalism. The group was in the first wave of what became a sweeping westward migration, and its disastrous fate is deeply embedded in the national psyche. Over the years, the story has taken many forms. First, it was a gripping news event, and then it was a tabloid sensation; with the gold rush, it became a spooky campfire legend told by forty-niners, whose own perilous journeys West were burnished by the tale. The next generation—comfortably established, historically self-conscious, and already experiencing nostalgia for the old days—made pioneer heroes of the vilified company. The major proponent of this view was an enterprising Truckee journalist and jack-of-all-trades named Charles Fayette McGlashan. In 1879, he set out to write the true history of the Donner Party. He later explained, "I had been seven years in Truckee, as teacher, lawyer and editor, and from the best information I had then been able to acquire, believed the Donner Party consisted of four people: Donner, his wife, a Dutchman, and somebody else, and that the Dutchman ate the others up."

As McGlashan soon discovered, the party actually consisted of eighty-one people, two-thirds of whom camped near what is today called Donner Lake. The rest, including all the members of the Donner family, stayed in a meadow some seven miles away. His careful investigation—he studied all the existing records, and corresponded with twenty-four of the twenty-six survivors then living—yielded a series of articles for the Truckee *Republican* and, a short time later, a book that for many years stood as the authoritative version. He befriended several of the survivors, and eventually used his influence to help build a massive bronze sculpture on the shores of Donner Lake, dedicated to the emigrants, called Pioneer Monument. (It is inscribed with the words "Virile to risk and find; kindly withal and a ready help. Facing the brunt of fate; indomitable,—unafraid," and when it was completed, in 1918, it weighed eighteen tons.) But McGlashan's emotional Victorian prose, and his essential delicacy, managed in some respects to obscure more than it revealed. Other accounts—both first-hand and after-the-fact—were equally compromised.

It has long been accepted that cannibalism occurred at the lake and among those trying to escape the mountains. Survivors admitted it, and, in the nineteen-eighties, an archeologist from the University of Nevada named Donald Hardesty found human bone fragments at the lake in a deposition with burned and butchered cow bones. But everything about the Donner Family Camp—even its location—has been disputed, and among the eleven survivors, most of them orphaned children, the subject of cannibalism was especially contentious. To this day, descendants of the family say that they don't believe any such thing occurred. Nonetheless, "Donner" is still a byword for cannibalism, and the descendants, like their forebears, want to disentangle their family's experience

BRUCE McCALL



*For generations, the ill-fated Donner Party has been a byword for cannibalism; now archeologists are looking for hard evidence.*

from that of the larger group that bore their name.

In a phenomenally unreliable historical record, cloudy with misperceptions, contradictions, self-deceit, and macabre exaggeration, Dixon and Schablitsky saw an opportunity. As historical archeologists, Schablitsky says, their job is to "confirm, contribute to, or contradict the written record," and always to keep in mind by whom and for what purpose history is written. (She also says that historical archeologists are the "red-haired stepchildren of archeology," looked down upon by archeologists of the prehistoric period, who don't realize how much their discipline can add to already documented sites.) In most tellings, the Donner Party story begins with the travellers being snowed in and ends with cannibalism. "We want to know more," Dixon says. "We want to know about the experiences not only of the men but of the women and the children out there. We want to say something about human behavior. They were trying to adjust very quickly to a terrible situation. What did they do in that camp when pushed to the limits?" Using a modern hybrid of anthropology and forensic science, and drawing on the expertise of a large research team, the archeologists hope to reframe one of the most enduring and confused myths of the American West, turning it from a horror story about ghoulish appetites or a melodrama of pioneer travail and triumph into a case study of starvation, adaptation, and survival. The goal, Dixon says, is to "affect the way history is told—to affect the way collective memory exists as we know it."

In 1845, the United States Senate published the report of Captain J. C. Frémont, of the topographical bureau, on his expeditions to Oregon and California, and helped launch an era of exploration and Western colonization. Many of those who travelled with the Donner Party were respectable agrarian types, who had given up stable Midwestern existences for the extravagant promise of California: a place where, it was rumored, a man could live two hundred and fifty years and, when he died, be resurrected by the "health-breathing Californian zephyrs." George Donner, the party's captain and namesake, was a farmer from Springfield, Illinois, in late middle age. His wife, Tamsen, a teacher born in Massachusetts, held a regular literary salon; during the winter before they embarked, she used the gatherings to read from a popular book, "The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California," which exhorted flatlanders to "exchange the sterile hills, bleak mountains, chilling winds, and piercing cold of their native lands, for the deep, rich, and productive soil, and uniform, mild and delightful climate, of this unparalleled region." The author, Lansford Hastings, was a young adventurer who hoped to make his name in the emerging territory. California was a place, he claimed, "in all respects, to promote the unbounded happiness and prosperity, of civilized and enlightened man."

George and Tamsen left Illinois with three ox-drawn wagons in April of 1846, bringing with them his two daughters from a previous marriage—Elitha, who was thirteen, and Leanna, who was eleven—and their three young girls, Frances, Georgia, and Eliza, who were five, four, and three. Tamsen planned to start a ladies' seminary, and took books and school supplies. An amateur botanist, she packed watercolors and oil paints, along with silver spoons and what one of her daughters remembered as "pretty white lace day caps trimmed with dainty ribbon bows." She dressed her little girls in linsey dresses and petticoats; Frances got a blue-and-white patterned cloak with a matching wool hood, and her younger sisters had the same in red. They brought expensive silks, satins, and velvet to trade with the Mexicans, and cheaper cotton prints and beads for the Indians they might meet along the way; as Eliza later wrote, they also carried religious pamphlets "to distribute among the heathen in the benighted land to which we were going." They had extra oxen, some beef cattle, milk cows, horses, and a dog, Uno. George's brother Jacob also had three wagons, for his wife, Elizabeth, and their seven children. The Donners formed a caravan with their neighbor James Reed, a wealthy furniture manufacturer, and his family, who rode in an elaborate double-decker wagon, and took with them good brandy and a small library. The emigrants, though laden with all the accoutrements of civilization, were anxious about what would become of them in the coarse, unknown land beyond the States. Virginia Reed, who was twelve at the time, wrote in a memoir many years later, "Some of Mama's young friends gave her a mirror in order, as they said, that my mother might not forget to keep her good looks."

As the group made its way across the plains, it picked up more wagons. Lewis Keseberg (McGlashan's infamous "Dutchman"), a German-born Ohio man, travelling with his wife and two toddlers, joined, as did the Breens, a large Catholic family. In mid-July, the party encountered a lone horseman who carried a letter from Lansford Hastings outlining a new, shorter route to California. When the road forked, the company took the left branch, onto the Hastings cutoff. It was bad advice, and forced the men of the Donner Party to forge a road through the Wasatch Mountains, wasting a month and sapping their reserves of food and energy. Then the wagons had to cross the Great Salt Desert: eighty miles, not forty, as Hastings claimed. In the desert, the children sucked on flattened bullets to make themselves salivate; oxen, smelling distant water, stampeded and dispersed.

By the time the caravan reached the other side of the desert, it had become an attenuated thread across the landscape, and the group, which at the outset established common laws and rules, had begun to fall apart. In early October, James Reed killed another family's teamster in a scuffle, and was banished; then Hardkoop, an older Belgian man, was put out of Keseberg's wagon and left for dead; a week later, a Mr. Wolfinger, travelling with his wife and a quantity of gold, disappeared, probably murdered by two teamsters who had hung back to help him cache his wagon. As George Stewart, the author of an influential 1936 account, saw it, "The cruel individualism of the westerner had gained the upper hand."

Toward the end of the month, the advance wagons reached the Sierra Nevada and attempted a crossing, but a heavy snowfall forced them back to the lake. They took shelter in an existing cabin, and built two more cabins and a lean-to. The Donners, already at least a day behind, were delayed further when George had to fix a broken wagon axle, and cut his hand. They stopped in a meadow, and were just starting to build a cabin when the storm hit.

Leanna wrote to McGlashan, "The snow came on so sudden that we had barely time to pitch our tent, and put up a small brush shed, as it were. One side open, thus"—she drew a sketch—"this brush shed was covered with pine boughs, and then covered with rubber coats, quilts etc. My Uncle Jacob & family also had a tent, he camped near us." Later, she told her youngest sister, Eliza, "We did not have any hut, our winter quarters were made of a scaffold, covered with boughs and what few blankets and quilts we could spare and we had a small tent to sleep in. Our scaffold was built right at the root of the tree and we cooked under the scaffold."

The Donners, either because they couldn't rejoin their companions at the lake or because they preferred not to, stayed in the meadow for the next four months. With them were the widow Wolfinger and five hired men: Noah James, Joseph Reinhardt, James Smith, Samuel Shoemaker, and a sixteen-year-old boy of Mexican and French origin named Jean Baptiste Trudeau—a total of twenty-two people. The snow was debilitating, and, as Trudeau said later, the difficulty of gathering wood meant that they "were often without fires for days." Tamsen is said to have kept a detailed journal, but no such document has ever been found. On November 30th, Patrick Breen, at the lake camp, wrote in his diary, "No living thing without wings can get about." The emigrants began to die, in what Donald Grayson, an archeologist at the University of Washington, has described as a "case study of mediated natural selection in action": the single men, who had done the heavy lifting in the Wasatch, went first, and then the very old and the very young. George Donner, Grayson believes, was spared in these first rounds because his injured hand made him an invalid. Occasionally, men from the lake camp trekked the seven miles to the meadow and brought back reports of the Donner clan. By the end of December, Breen noted, Jacob Donner, Shoemaker, Reinhardt, and Smith were dead, and "the rest of them in a low situation."

AND A READY HELP. FACING THE BRUNT OF FATE: INDOMITABLE,—UNAFRAID.
NIA REPUBLI

*Frances and Eliza Donner (second and third from right) attended the dedication of Pioneer Monument, in 1918.*

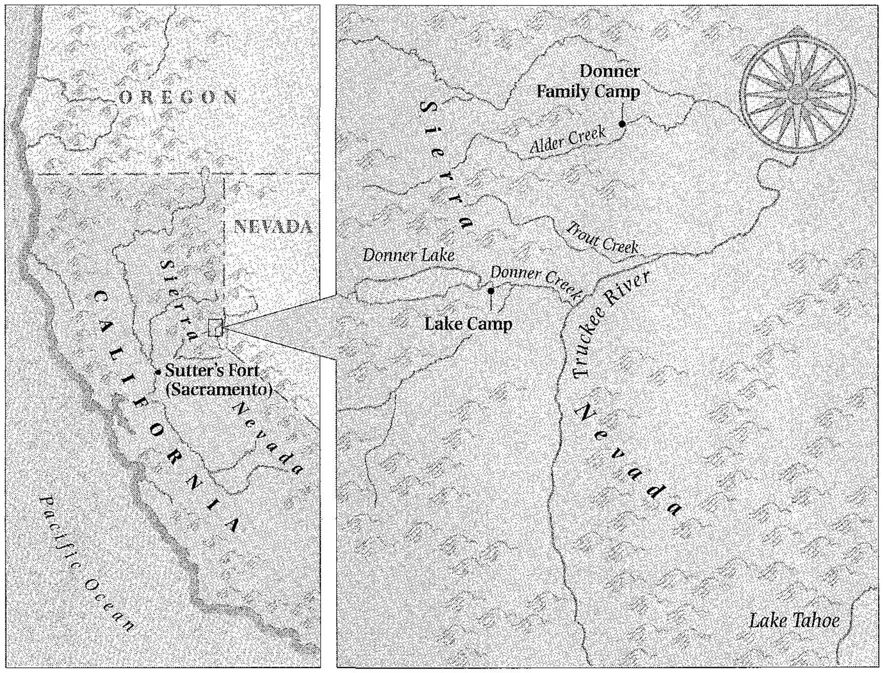
H. J. THOMAS/BANCROFT LIBRARY/UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

In the summer of 2003, Dixon and Schablitsky started an excavation in Alder Creek meadow, a picnic area in the Tahoe National Forest long identified as the Donner Family Camp, where the descendants of George and Jacob Donner, dozens of whom still live in California, hold big, jolly reunions. Lochie Paige, Elitha Donner's sixty-one-year-old great-granddaughter and the family spokesperson, told me that she supports the archeological work. "The stigma that goes with the cannibalism is something that is still around," she said. "I think that they will give us answers."

The archeologists found some seven hundred and fifty artifacts in Alder Creek meadow, and, over a long weekend late last spring, Schablitsky visited Dixon's lab in Missoula to study them. She sat at a wooden table, with the collection spread before her, each piece in a small bag: shards of bottle glass (aqua, olive, colorless), ceramics (shell-and-feather-edge ware, decorative sprig-painted china), fragments of mirror, lantern glass, buttons, wagon gear, lead shot, writing slate. Schablitsky was trying to visualize the layout of the camp. "We have pieces of slate and teacups—did Tamsen Donner sit here, huddled around the fire hearth with her children, practicing spelling and math?" she said. "Is this where they had their tea?"

Nearby, Dixon worked at a computer, organizing an extensive electronic database of the artifacts. She swivelled away from the screen and picked up a bag with an intact metal button in it. “We have to let these little, excruciating crumbles help us re-create the last scene,” she said. “And perhaps use that as a stepping stone to re-create the ambience and the atmosphere of that camp. That’s why the rest of the world—they laugh when they see the fragmentary nature of the Donner collection. This button, by the way, is huge.” She showed me some of the slate fragments, which were still covered with orange dirt from the field. (Because of their interest in retrieving DNA, the archeologists didn’t wash the artifacts.) “We wish we could read what someone was writing at the Donner Family Camp,” she said. “We always said, ‘If only we could find Tamsen’s journal.’ Then we realized—there’s slate there! Oh, my gosh, people wrote on it! Tamsen was a teacher. Was she actually attempting to normalize and have her children do lessons? We don’t know.” Dixon explained that in the mid-nineteenth century people used slate pencils, rather than chalk, and the impressions should exist in the layers of the slate tablets. To her knowledge, no one has ever tried to examine slate in this way, but she assigned a graduate student to look into it, and borrowed some time at the scanning electron microscope in the university’s biology lab. “We want to know if there is some way to read remnants of writing,” she said.

“That’s the thing,” Schablitsky said. “Is there a message from the past scrawled on the slate?”



*When the party reached the Sierra Nevada, it split into two camps.*

In the meadow, the archeologists also found sixteen thousand pieces of badly burned and “calcined”—nearly incinerated—bone. The soil at Alder Creek is acidic, and the burning may have acted as a preservative; very little unburned bone was found. There was one piece of special interest, which the research team nicknamed “the Bone”: an inch-long segment with signs of butchering that were visible to the naked eye. Dixon turned on an overhead fluorescent light and picked up a black box with a window in the top. The fragment rested inside on a bed of cotton gauze; it was gray and veined with black, like a chunk of granite, with three thin scratches across the top. “You can see how blatant the chop marks are,” she said, placing it under a microscope. Magnified, it looked lunar, with shaded canyons, cracks, and spindly little lines. “That bluish sheen and the really white chalky color that you see is what happens to bone when it’s subjected to really high temperatures for very long periods of time,” she said. “It appears to have been thrown into the fire hearth.”

The signature for cannibalism in its simplest form was described by the physical anthropologist Christy Turner as “the three B’s”: breakage, burning, and butchery. The bones that Dixon and Schablitsky found were badly damaged; still, they hoped that some genetic material might have survived, and sent a large sample (along with a whetstone and some of the spent lead shot) to a company called Trace Genetics, near San Francisco, which specializes in ancient DNA. They wanted to determine the species of the bones and, if any were found to be human, attempt to connect them to Donner descendants. Dixon jokes that theirs is the “archeology of desperation”—the Donners were desperate, and so are they.

In summer, the meadow at Alder Creek is speckled with fat dandelions, clumps of sagebrush, delicate white wild onions, hardy yarrow, and Queen Anne’s lace, and edged with fifty-foot-tall Ponderosa pines. There are little heaps of freshly overturned dirt—the work of burrowing rodents—and a couple of snowmelt creeks. A mile in the distance, Prosser Reservoir floats flat and blue; beyond it looms the imposing granite palisade of the Sierra Nevada, which one nineteenth-century traveller described as a “formidable and apparently impassable barrier.” At the far end of the meadow is a tall hollow stump with a black burn scar; its upper half lies supine a few yards off, with the crown protruding like the tangled rack of an old elk. This is what remains of the “George Donner tree,” anecdotally identified as the place where George and his family built their camp. The burn, it was said, was from the cooking fire.

In the middle of July, Dixon went up to Alder Creek to collect soil samples. It was a hot day, and she was wearing cargo pants and a tank top. She took from her car a T-shaped soil probe and a Munsell chart, which showed a palette of soil colors, and set off to find the baseline markers she had installed the year before. Alder Creek is a problematic archeological site: the rodents churn the earth; the acidic soil eats away at what is buried there; it’s cold in the winter, hot in the summer, and the creek system creates seasonal flooding. It has been looted from the time of its abandonment. In the year since Dixon had last been there, the meadow grasses had grown high. “Feel how uneven the ground is,” she said. “There’s a lot of activity here.” She indicated a slight change in elevation that

JEFFREY WARD

marked the beginning of the one-by-one-metre units that she and Schablitsky excavated, alongside a number of units dug by Donald Hardesty a decade earlier. Hardesty, too, had unearthed hundreds of Donner-era artifacts in the meadow, and wrote a fascinating book called "The Archeology of the Donner Party," but he didn't find a hearth, which meant that he could reach no conclusions about the structure of the site, or even prove that the Donners had stayed there. (A competing theory, advocated by a trail historian named Don Wiggins, held that the site was actually under Prosser Reservoir.) Dixon and Schablitsky's team did identify a hearth, in 2004. In Dixon's formal description, it was "a roughly circular, grayish-black stain with a series of layers, including a deposit of burned and calcined bone, which sat atop a concentration of charred wood, which lay on top of fine, powdery ash." Now submerged under a thick pelt of grass and wildflowers, the hearth is the epicenter of the site, the place from which most of the artifacts were pulled.

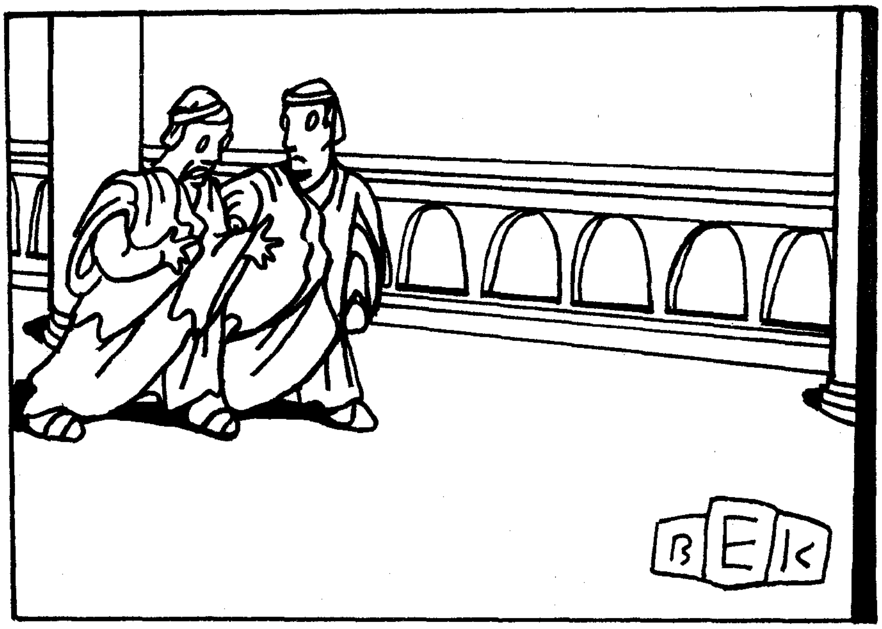
Dixon pointed out the legendary George Donner tree. Hardesty's excavation had demonstrated that the lore was apocryphal: no relevant artifacts were found by the tree, and the burn, he determined, was probably the result of a natural fire. "I like the story that it tells," Dixon said. "In a relatively short amount of time, the actual encampment location was lost, and it was re-created, and then *that* became reality, and the power of collective memory lingered until Donald Hardesty did his work over there and said, 'Actually, I don't think that *is* the George Donner tree.' " She walked a few metres to the southwest and gathered soil from a unit that, the summer before, had optimistically been named Unit George, after a team of human-remains detection dogs repeatedly "alerted" there. (The dogs, which are mostly border collies and are trained in graveyards, belong to an organization called the Institute for Canine Forensics, which sent a crew to the World Trade Center in the aftermath of 9/11 and to Texas to search for the bodies of the Columbia space-shuttle astronauts.) Excavating the pit, the archeologists had found neither George's bones nor anything else, but Dixon wanted to look at the soil composition in the lab.

The next day was hot, too, and Dixon and I drove up Donner Pass to walk a portion of the Old Emigrant Trail. The pass is at seven thousand feet, and snowfall there can be heavy: many of the modern houses we saw along the road had, in addition to steep chalet-style roofs, snow tunnels and entrances on the second and third stories. We parked near a late-nineteenth-century Chinese railroad campsite, and switchbacked up a rocky trail. The path crossed under a set of ski lifts and entered a forest of ancient red firs covered with fluorescent-green moss. In the clearings, there were patches of snow and thick green corn lilies. At the summit, the snow was packed and icy, like a Sno-Cone, and covered with pine needles. We walked over to a precipitous drop-off. Below us was Donner Lake, teal-blue and foamy with the wakes of motorboats, and, to the west, a huge, vertical volcanic rock outcropping. "We look around at this and are just floored with appreciation and splendor," Dixon said. "You've got to wonder how it would look wearing a different pair of goggles."

In December of 1846, the snow on the pass was twelve feet deep when a group of fifteen snowshoers from the lake started across in a desperate attempt to get help. It took the "Forlorn Hope," as the journalist McGlashan later named them, a month, and eight died along the way. The survivors ate the dead, then consumed their own moccasins, and finally killed their two Indian guides for food. When the snowshoers got through, and word reached Sutter's Fort, a garrison that still stands in modern Sacramento, on the western side of the mountains, the newspapers eagerly took up the story of the stranded emigrants. Some of the early accounts were sympathetic, and sought to raise money for rescue expeditions ("We hope that our citizens will do something for the relief of these unfortunate people"). Other journalists, perhaps mindful of the pall that the disaster might cast over future emigration, portrayed it as something that could have been avoided. In mid-February, with most of the party still trapped at the two camps, the California *Star* ran a story that declared, "The whole party might have reached the California valley before the first fall of snow, if the men had exerted themselves as they should have done." In a shadow of what was to come, the newspaper also reported that the snowshoers had "made meat of the dead bodies of their companions."

A rescue party—the "first relief"—soon set out from Sutter's Fort. It was slow going; the men estimated the snow on the pass at thirty feet. Meanwhile, some twelve hundred feet below in the meadow, the Donners' tents were buried, visible to each other only by coils of smoke rising up from the drifts. Jean Baptiste Trudeau, the teen-age servant, fished for the lost cattle. "I used a pole with a hook, or nail fastened to the end, then I pushed into the snow," he recalled later. "Hair would catch on the hook, and I would then be sure I had found the right place." The three younger Donner girls, who were the most outspoken about their experience (and, given that none were older than six, the least authoritative), remembered eating boiled hides and burned bones. "We tried to eat a decayed buffalo robe, but it was too tough, and there was no nourishment in it," Georgia said. "Some of the few mice that came into camp were caught and eaten." Eliza wrote that as supplies dwindled "marrowless bones which had already been boiled and scraped, were now burned and eaten, even the bark and twigs of pine were chewed in the vain effort to soothe the gnawings which made one cry for bread and meat." There were a few comforting scenes. Georgia told a story about Tamsen combing her hair every morning, while entertaining her with Biblical tales: "Joseph and his cruel brethren, Daniel in the lion's den, Elijah and the ravens . . . the cruet of oil and the meal which never grew less."

The first relief reached the Donners in late February. One rescuer wrote that "the two families had but one beef head amongst them, there was two cows buried in the snow but it was doubtful if they would be able to find them." After the relief stopped at the lake on its way out, Patrick Breen described an even grimmer situation in his diary. Four days earlier, he wrote, "the Donners told the California folks that they commence to eat the dead people . . . if they did not succeed that day or next in finding their cattle then under ten or twelve feet of snow and did not know the spot near it. I suppose they have done so ere this time." The res-



*"My contractor told me Rome would only take a day."*

cuers had brought a small ration of biscuits, beef, and flour—the rest they cached in the mountains for the return trip—and could take back with them only those who were capable of fending for themselves. George Donner's two older daughters, Elitha and Leanna, were tall and strong enough to walk through the snowbanks on the pass, and the relief took them safely to Sutter's Fort. The rescuers made Trudeau, who could have walked out, too, stay behind to provide for the helpless.

Ten days afterward, the second relief arrived. It was later reported (and widely repeated) that the rescuers saw some of the Donner children "sitting upon a log, with their faces stained with blood, devouring the half-roasted liver and heart of the father"—Jacob, presumably, since George was still alive—and Trudeau carrying a severed leg. Some of the family were in surprisingly good condition. The leader of this relief noted in his diary, "At George Donner tent there was 3 stout hearty children." He mentioned that Tamsen, too, was healthy enough to travel but insisted on staying behind with George. Little Frances, Georgia, and Eliza, dressed in their red and blue cloaks with matching hoods, were taken to the lake camp, and, after a short stay in Keseberg's cabin, evacuated with the third relief. Sometime in mid-March, George died, and Tamsen, the last one alive in the meadow, left for the lake.

When members of the final relief arrived, they found only a seriously dishevelled Keseberg and a heap of mutilated remains, and accused him of murdering Tamsen. Captain Fallon, who led the rescue party—more of a scavenge party, really—allegedly kept a journal (the original, if there was one, is lost), and its "thrilling" details were published in the California *Star* in June. The story made a scapegoat of Keseberg, who admitted that circumstance had forced him to cannibalize but vehemently denied the charge of murder. (He later won a one-dollar settlement against his detractors.) About the Donners' camp, Fallon wrote, "At the mouth of the tent stood a large iron kettle, filled with human flesh, cut up. It was from the body of George Donner. The head had been split open, and the brains extracted therefrom." Other sources say that George was found wrapped in a sheet and carefully laid out: Tamsen's last act of tenderness.

The story of the doomed wagon train entered popular culture mercilessly fast. Kristin Johnson, a librarian in Salt Lake City, who is a self-taught historian and the research team's expert on the Donner Party, cites as an early example a letter written by the sheriff at Sutter's Fort to a friend camping in the Sierra Nevada in March of 1847: "I advise you to look out for those Man eating Women, from what I can learn from Glover"—a member of the first relief—"they prefer that kind of meat in larger than *Nine inch* pieces too." The emigrants' fate became a folk morality tale: a warning against greed, laziness, and choosing the wrong fork in the road. It also became, primarily, a story for children, and for decades it has been taught to fourth graders in the California public schools. It was a child's letter—written by Virginia Reed to her cousins back home, from the safety of the Napa Valley in the spring of 1847—that captured the party's chilling lesson: "Never take no cutoffs and hurry along as fast as you can."

More than anything, stories about the Donner Party dwelled on how thoroughly the emigrants had been transformed by their ordeal. The California *Star* ran a report saying, "So changed had the emigrants become that when the party sent out, arrived with food, some of them cast it aside and seemed to prefer the putrid human flesh that still remained." Another journalist, attempting, he said, to combat such sensational accounts, wrote, "The change which their unspeakable sufferings had produced seemed to affect the very texture of their nature and being." Talk of transformation worked as a distancing technique, and even Eliza Donner told of how her cousins, formerly "chubby and playful," became in camp "so changed in looks that I scarcely knew them, and they stared at me as at a stranger." Cannibalism, actual or imagined, is a frontier phenomenon—"the mark of greatest imaginable cultural difference," the literary scholar Peter Hulme has written. The Donner Party had set out to civilize what they saw as a barbaric land. The reputed cannibalism refigured their colonial story with a cruel twist: the civilizers themselves became savages.

Guy Tasa's lab at the University of Oregon, in Eugene, is a low, freestanding house in a neighborhood of student apartments not far from the center of campus. The peeling wooden sign out front is deliberately vague and misleading; Tasa, an expert in skeletal remains, occasionally works with the medical examiner's office identifying bones from crime scenes, and doesn't want to invite attention. He is in his early forties, and fair, with a short beard and milky blue eyes. When I visited, he had in his office a recent copy of the tabloid *Star*, in which he had been quoted analyzing the facial structure of a Brad Pitt look-alike.

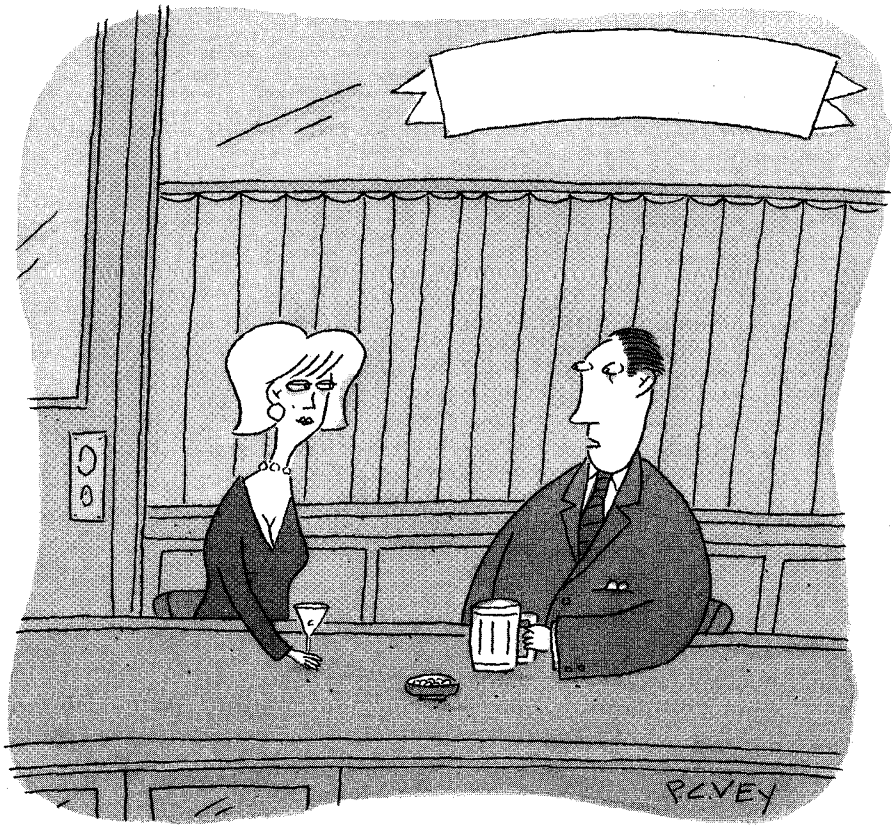
Tasa, who had been enlisted by Dixon and Schablitsky to examine the Donner bones, said that the specimens were so fragmented—the sixteen thousand pieces weighed less than five pounds—that it had been almost impossible to determine how many animals were represented. Most pieces were a quarter or an eighth of an inch long, and none were bigger than half an inch. "The vast, vast majority of the material is unidentifiable chunks," he said. "After that, it's shaft fragments, and fragments from the middle of the bone that are pretty difficult to I.D., because there are no features." He could pin down only fifteen bones to a taxonomic category: Artiodactyla, or even-toed ungulates (cow, deer, elk). He could name the species of one fragment: cow.

Of the bones that Tasa could classify, he placed by far the greatest number—some two thousand pieces, including "the Bone"—in Class V, a size group that includes humans, deer, and bears. "Most you can exclude as human," he said. "But there were a couple of times when I was making my notes that I wrote 'human?' You can't make that identification visually, but they don't look like deer." He went on, "The bones are burned, and they are fractured, and there are some cut marks. If we could just find the burned, cut-marked piece of bone that was identifiable as human. Otherwise, you've got nothing that definitively says that cannibalism occurred there, beyond the historical record." In addition, Tasa put three pieces in Class VI (cow- or elk-size), fifteen pieces in Class IV (dog- or coyote-size), three in Class III (rabbit- or fox-size), and one, which appeared to be the rib of a large rodent, in Class II. Dixon seemed excited about the Class IV bones. "A lot of people have been asking us whether the Donners would have eaten their dog," she said. "Of course, there's no way we can actually prove this was their dog"—Uno lasted at the camp, according to one of the Donner girls, long enough to eat her shoes—"but now we've got something interesting in terms of alternatives to cannibalism."

Tasa sent the assemblage to Shannon Novak, a forensic anthropologist at Idaho State University, who has analyzed human skeletal remains from cannibal sites in the Great Basin. Novak sampled more than three hundred pieces, and saw what she described as "screaming trauma": cuts, chops, saw marks, and "percussion pits"—V-shaped divots where the tip of a knife had been inserted, probably to break the bone down for grease extraction. Some of the bones showed pot polish: shiny patches that are thought to form when bones in boiling water are abraded by the surface of the cooking vessel. (The feature was identified by Tim White, a physical anthropologist, when he examined bones from an Anasazi cannibal site in Colorado in the mid-eighties.) "I have never seen processing like this," Novak said about the Donner collection. "Honestly. I have analyzed cannibalized sites and forensic cases, where you get postmortem dismemberment, and if this is not a starvation site I don't know what is. They are processing this bone down to nubbins."

Novak looked at the level at which each artifact had been unearthed, and found that, despite the rodent disturbance at the site, there were almost twice as many scars on pieces from the shallowest level as from the deepest: a clear pattern of increasing desperation. She also noticed that there were no rodent gnaw marks or carnivore puncture wounds, which told her that by the time the wild animals got to the site everything nutritious was gone. The trauma dispelled any doubt that the bones belonged to the Donner Family Camp. "The time is right, the artifacts are right, the processing is spectacular, and the pot polish—I mean, you really do not see people go to those extremes unless they're hungry," she said.

When Novak looked at the Bone under a scanning electron microscope, she determined that the chop marks had been made with a thin blade, like a bowie knife; the shape of the impressions told her that they had been made on fresh, "green" bone. In places, the surface was discolored gray and brown, a condition that occurs when heat gets underneath tissue and



*"If I had known I was going to meet somebody like you, I would have lost some weight, got some hair plugs, and made more money."*

smokes the bone. That observation, along with the presence of pot polish and the fact that the chop marks themselves were calcined, meant that this piece had been cooked twice: first with flesh on it, and then again when it was bare.

Several months after he was rescued, Jean Baptiste Trudeau told a naval lieutenant whom he met in San Francisco about his misadventure with the Donner Party: "Eat baby raw, stewed some of Jake, and roasted his head, not good meat, taste like sheep with the rot; but, sir, very hungry, eat anything." (The baby would have been Jacob and Elizabeth's three-year-old son, who died in early March.) A passerby in September, 1847, reported seeing "a skull covered with hair lying here, a mangled arm or leg yonder, with the bones broken as one would break a beef shank to obtain the marrow from it." In 1879, Georgia—four going on five during the ordeal—wrote to McGlashan, "When I spoke of human flesh being used at both tents, I said it was prepared for the *little ones* in both tents. I did not mean to include the larger (my half sisters) children or the grown people, because I am not positive that they tasted of it. Father was crying and did not look at us during this time, and we little ones felt that we could not help it. There was nothing else. Jacob Donner's wife came down the steps one day saying to mother 'What do you think I cooked this morning?' Then answered the question herself, 'Shoemaker's arm.'" For the most part, however, the survivors from the Donner Family Camp kept mum.

## THE ADVENTURES OF 78 CHARLES STREET

For thirty-two years Patricia Parmelee's yellow light
has burned all night
in her kitchen down the hall in 2E.
Patricia—I love to say her name—Par-me-lee!
knows where, across the street,
Hart Crane wrote "The Bridge,"
the attic Saul Bellow holed up in
furiously scribbling "The Adventures of Augie March,"
the rooftop Bing Crosby yodelled off,
dreaming of Broadway, the knotty,
epicene secrets of each born-again town house.
Indeed, we, Patricia and me, reminisce
about tiny Lizzie and Joe Pasquinnucci,
one deaf, the other near-blind,
waddling hand in hand down the hall,
up the stairs, in and out of doors,
remembering sweetening Sicilian peaches,
ever-blooming daylilies, a combined one hundred
and seventy years of fuming sentence fragments,
elastic stockings, living and outliving
everyone on the south side of Charles Street.

How Millie Melterborne, a powerhouse
of contemptuous capillaries inflamed
with memories of rude awakenings,
wrapped herself in black chiffon
when her knocked-up daughter Kate married a Mafia son
and screamed "Nixon, blow me!"
out her fifth-floor window,
then dropped dead face first
into her gin-spiked oatmeal.
How overnight Sharon in 4E
became a bell-ringing Buddhist
explaining cat litter, America, pleurisy, multiple orgasms,
why I couldn't love anyone who loved me.

And Archie McGee in 5W, one silver-cross earring,
a tidal wave of dyed black hair,
motorcycle boots jingling, Jesus boogying
on each enraged oiled bicep, screaming
four flights down at me for asking
the opera singer across the courtyard to pack it in,
"This is N.Y.C., shithead, where fat people sing while fucking!"
Archie, whom Millie attacked with pliers
and Lizzie fell over, drunk on the stairs, angry
if you nodded or didn't, from whom, hearing his boots,

More than her sisters, Eliza, who had just turned four when she was rescued, was haunted by the rumors that she had grown up hearing: Keseberg had murdered her mother for food, and the Donners themselves were man-eaters. When McGlashan wrote to her about participating in his history, she wrote back, "I feel a deep interest in having the truth told," and warned him not to conflate the story of the Donner Party in general with that of her family. In the spring of 1879, McGlashan wrote to Eliza, "You will be glad to know that I put Harry N. Morse's Detective Agency of Oakland upon the track of Keseberg, and that if found, I mean to take steps to obtain his confession." When he met Keseberg, though, he found him sympathetic, polylingual, scholarly in bearing, and "the most forlorn, pitiable, accursed being I ever saw." Keseberg swore that Tamsen had died a natural death—though he hinted that he had eaten her afterward—and McGlashan believed him. Eliza went to question Keseberg for herself and reported, "Unflinchingly Lewis Keseberg passed the ordeal which would have made a guilty man quake."

McGlashan and Eliza corresponded often, and their growing intimacy was compromising in the end. He was too mindful of embarrassing her—he even in-

I hid shaking under the stairwell,
until I found him trembling outside my door,
"Scram, Zorro, I'll be peachy in the morning."
In a year three others here were dead of AIDS,
everyone wearing black,
but in the West Village everyone did
every day anyway.

Patricia says, The Righteous Brothers and I
moved in Thanksgiving, 1977,
and immediately began looking for
that ever-loving feeling, rejoicing
at being a citizen of the ever-clanging future,
all of us walking up Perry Street,
down West Tenth, around Bleecker,
along the Hudson, with dogs, girlfriends,
and hangovers, stoned and insanely sober,
arm in arm and solo, under the big skyline,
traffic whizzing by, through
indefatigable sunshine, snow, and rain,
listening to the Stones, Monk, Springsteen, and Beethoven,
one buoyant foot after the other, nodding hello
good morning happy birthday adieu adios auf wiedersehen!
before anyone went co-op, renovated,
thought about being sick or dying,
when we all had hair and writhed on the floor
because someone didn't love us anymore,
when nobody got up before noon, wore a suit,
or joined anything, before there was hygiene,
confetti, a salary, cholesterol,
or a list of names to invite to a funeral . . .

Yes, the adventures of a street in a city of everlasting hubris,
and Patricia's yellow light
when I can't sleep and come to the kitchen
to watch its puny precious speck stretch
so quietly so full of reverence
into the enormous darkness,
and I, overcome with love for everything so quickly fading,
my head stuck out the window
breathing the intoxicating melody
of our shouldered-and-cemented-in little island,
here, now, in the tenement of this moment,
dear Patricia's light,
night after night,
burning with all the others,
on 78 Charles Street.

*—Philip Schultz*

vited her to edit his manuscript—and so, despite what Georgia had told him about "the *little ones*" and "Shoemaker's arm," his book came out later that year with no mention of cannibalism among the Donner family. Instead, McGlashan focussed his discussion of the Donners on the steadfast loyalty of Tamsen, who sacrificed her life rather than leave her husband to die alone.

Eventually, Eliza started researching a book of her own. According to the historian Kristin Johnson, Eliza's decision to tell her family's story was prompted by an encounter with her past that was even more radical than the one with Keseberg. In 1884, she was visited by Jean Baptiste Trudeau, who, contrary to his earlier statement, told her, "At no time did the people in the Donner Camps eat human flesh." He said that the hair and bones seen scattered around the campsite belonged to cattle. When Eliza's book came out, in 1911, it contained a strong denial that any cannibalism occurred in the meadow—she said her parents wouldn't allow it—and dismissed the California *Star* article that described the emigrants' preference for human flesh as "too utterly false, too cruelly misleading, to merit credence." She wrote, "Evidently, it was written without malice, but in ignorance, and by some warmly clad, well nourished person, who did not know the humanizing effect of suffering and sorrow." The so-called journal of the fourth relief, she said, was "wanton falsity." She must not have known about her sister Georgia's testimony, because she dedicated the book to her.

After several attempts, Trace Genetics gave up trying to extract DNA from the fragments it had been sent, concluding that the conditions at Alder Creek had degraded the signature beyond recognition. The Bone became the last best hope for finding archeological evidence of cannibalism. It had, in the meantime, broken of its own accord, and Dixon and Schablitsky decided to turn over a portion of it to Gwen Robbins, a graduate student in Tasa's department, to examine its microscopic architecture. For several months, Tasa had been supplying Robbins with mostly Class V bones from the Donner assemblage, and she had found cow, deer, and horse. The Class IV he gave her she identified as dog. But she hadn't found any human bone.

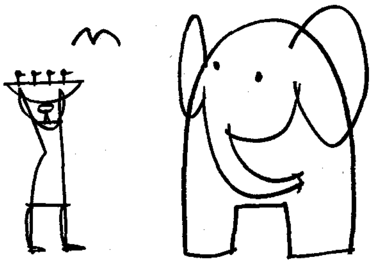
One morning in early December, Robbins, a tiny, serious thirty-three-year-old with an ankle tattoo, and Melissa Hanks, a twenty-four-year-old research assistant, met in Robbins's lab. The previous night, Robbins had stabilized the smaller piece of the Bone with superglue so that it wouldn't disintegrate. Then she ground down one face, using successively finer grades of sandpaper, until it was roughly a hundred micrometres thick, and mounted it on a slide. Wearing rubber gloves, Hanks placed the slide, bone side up, in a specimen dish, and kept it wet with distilled water as she sanded in a gentle, circular motion. Grayish bone water sloshed around in the tray, and after fifteen minutes a third of the specimen was gone. The room was quiet, except for the grainy windshield-wiper sound of bone being rubbed away.

When the slide was ready, Robbins looked at it under the microscope. The incandescent light of the bulb gave the specimen a warm, caramel color, but there were dark storm clouds where mineralization had occurred. She could already see that the bone was composed of structures potentially characteristic of human: the cells were organized in concentric patterns around a vascular canal—an arrangement known as an osteon—and the osteons had thick "cement lines" around them, which told her that they were part of secondary growth, a process that for humans starts in infancy. She didn't see any plexiform bone, which forms brick-like units for strength in young, fast-growing animals, and is very rare in people. "There's no one diagnostic factor—it's a combination of things," she said. She peered at the osteons, and said quietly, as if to herself, "It seems like maybe these are not going to be big enough to be human . . . I just don't think."

Robbins captured an image of the slide on a computer, and used the cursor to drag a thin yellow rule across each osteon and its central canal. "There are some larger osteons in here," she said, but after a moment she decided that the image was too blurry to yield accurate measurements, and asked Hanks to make the slide slightly thinner at the center. Hanks used a Q-tip with a bit of sandpaper affixed to it, and carefully took off more layers, until the specimen was almost completely translucent, and in danger of disappearing altogether. "I hope this works," Robbins said. "These bones are so bad." Hanks handed her the slide, and she began measuring again, entering each figure in a spreadsheet. She recorded the diameters of twenty-one canals, then moved on to the osteons with cement lines.

"They're falling out below the human range," she said, even considering the shrinkage expected when bone is exposed to high temperatures. She also noticed a large number of osteons without cement lines—primary osteons—which are uncommon in humans. She finished looking at the slide, and, with a slight, nervous laugh, said, "This is not human." She smiled. "Sadly." The Bone, she said, belonged to a horse.

Out of the silence surrounding the Donner Family Camp, the archeologists have been able to tell a story that focusses on small acts of adaptation and survival, and which, they hope, will add nuance to the Donners' image. Perhaps it will even help make obsolete the lurid shorthand of their name. The discovery of the hearth and the condition of the artifacts makes it clear that they've found the camp: now they can begin to say something about site structure and day-to-day life. During the excavation, Schablitsky noticed that the units toward the west had an invisible line running through them from north to south—to the right of the line, artifacts were scattered randomly, but to the left there were no artifacts at all. This, she believes, is the ghost outline of the back wall of an open, east-facing shelter, perhaps the cooking scaffold that Leanna sketched for McGlashan. Under the scaffold, there were a number of nails and a charred fleck of non-native oak; Schablitsky thinks that the Donners might have torched their wagons when they had trouble getting wood. The lead shot found around the hearth, according to a munitions expert, is "puddled," or poorly formed, suggesting that someone was trying to make bullets, probably in an attempt to hunt. (The various bullets show that there were at least eight different firearms present.) Another artifact from this area, a bit of pale-blue glass, may have come from the bottom of a pharmaceutical bottle, and made Dixon think of George's wounded hand. "It's a tangible material reminder of a story—his four months of misery were also doubled with him slowly dying from an infection," she said. "You've not only got people starving to death out there, but now we've got an added dimension of somebody being very ill." So far, the slate has not surrendered its secrets, if it has any. To Dixon, the most tantalizing artifact remains the button she showed me in Missoula. From its markings, the archeologists determined that it belonged to a heavy overcoat. If that coat was used, as Leanna described, to weatherproof a tent, it would be evidence of adaptation: a garment being appropriated for a secondary, architectural use.



Of course, the archeologists know what aspect of the Donner Party has always fascinated the public most: diet. After studying the bones, they can say that if humans were used for food at Alder Creek their bones were not cooked—and thus preserved—because they are not represented in the archeological record as it now exists. According to Schablitsky, "We dug some serious units there, we moved some dirt, we have tons of bone samples, and if it's not coming out all I can think is that, like the Uruguayan rugby team"—who crashed in the Andes in 1972 and survived for ten weeks by eating the dead—"they may have been turning them over face down and skimming off parts of the back, the flank, backs of the thighs, and buttocks. So we're not going to see any bone because bone wasn't being consumed."

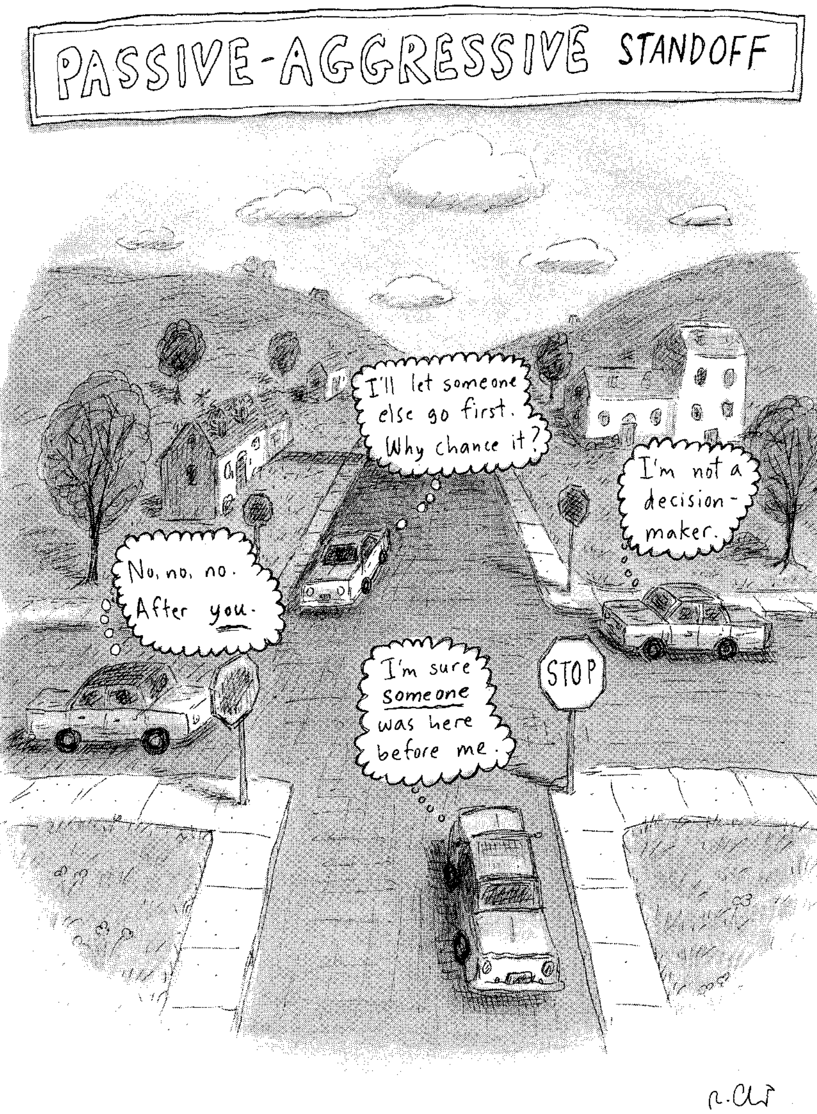
The excavation has revealed that the Donners were eating from a much more diverse menu than was previously thought, and appear to have done everything possible to avoid eating the dead. "The plot was a lot thicker than we were led to believe," Dixon said when she learned about Robbins's identification of the Bone. "It's not all about cannibalism. This is different. Those decisions about when to eat rodent, horse, cow, dog, are a lot more complex. That's important, and it paints a more complex picture. It's painting a human picture. In the end, you don't know exactly what happened, but you now have a lot of different perspectives." Novak finds the dog specimen particularly meaningful. According to Patrick Breen's diary, the group at the lake held off killing their dogs as long as possible—they ate the hide roofs off their cabins first—but as soon as the dogs were gone they began to speak of eating the human dead. Novak reasons that there may have been a similar pattern at Alder Creek.

In a sense, the Donners' reluctance to eat human flesh is their real tragedy. Had they more readily overcome their prejudice against the one remaining source of food, surely more of them would have survived. But in the bone assemblage

Schablitsky sees evidence of their ingenuity. "The biggest paradigm shift on the Donner Party is that the experience that occurred at Alder Creek, and the Donner Party story itself, wasn't as bad as everyone thought it was. It was brutal, it was hard, people died. But I think that they were a lot more successful at hunting and acquiring food than was previously thought. They had a lot of options before they cannibalized." The archeologists came to the conclusion that, if cannibalism did occur, it was most likely in the few weeks between the departure of the first relief, with Elitha and Leanna, in late February, and Tamsen's abandonment of the site, in mid-March.

Elitha, the eldest of the Donner survivors, died in 1923, at the age of ninety. She spent her last fifty years on a ranch outside Sacramento. She never discussed what happened at her family's camp, but, according to a local rumor, every year when the school did its unit on the Donner Party, she would sit in, listening silently from the back row. Lochie Paige, her great-granddaughter, grew up on the ranch, and now lives five blocks from Sutter's Fort—these days, a place where children go to see cannon demonstrations and to watch women in bonnets and calico skirts make biscuits—in a wooden house built in 1910, painted gray with blue trim. Lochie is a registered nurse, with deep-set brown eyes that she fancies she inherited from Elitha. She often lectures to historical societies—the Native Daughters of the Golden West, the Ladies Auxiliary to the California Pioneers—and to fourth graders. For the children, she dresses up as her great-grandmother, circa 1846, and talks about cannibalism only if she's asked.

On a wall of Lochie's living room is a Currier and Ives image, called "A Halt by the Wayside," that shows an emigrant party camping. Lochie's husband, Michael, who is of Oregon pioneer stock, gave it to her to symbolize the happy days of the Donners' journey. Above that is a needlepoint of Pioneer Monument, and nearby is a framed paperback edition of McGlashan's history from 1931. To Lochie, Alder Creek is a sacred place, and when she talks about it her voice quavers and her eyes well up. She and Michael visit there frequently, but only in the summer, because she hates the snow.


PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE STANDOFF
I'll let someone else go first. Why chance it?
I'm not a decision-maker.
No, no, no. After you.
I'm sure someone was here before me.
STOP

• •

Earlier this year, Dixon and Schablitsky announced their findings at an academic conference in Sacramento. In a presentation called "Humanizing the Past Through Archeology," they discussed the challenge posed by the Donner collection: "We have tiny, tiny fragments—how do we spin a story from them?" They reminded their colleagues that their work is in its preliminary stages—not yet peer-reviewed—and that though they haven't so far found evidence of cannibalism, they are not saying that cannibalism didn't take place.

Lochie, who spoke at the conference about growing up a Donner in California, has seized upon the tiny fragments to tell a story of her own, a kind of counter-narrative that uses the new science to legitimatize the family version. In other words, she heard what she had always wanted to believe: her great-grandmother had escaped the mountains before eating the dead. "This is such good news for us," she said after the conference. "I know it's not a hundred per cent, but it's pretty close." To celebrate, she invited the archeologists over to her house for champagne. Michael polished the silver and made cioppino. He passed around homemade jerky. Lochie was in good spirits, feeling freed from the vicious associations that had clung to her family name for a hundred and sixty years. In her contentment, she echoed her great-great-aunt Eliza, sharing her relief with McGlashan after Trudeau recanted his account of cannibalism.

"I am my old self again," Eliza wrote. "The numbed feeling and dreamy mood which followed Jean Baptiste's visit has worn off. . . . The missing link which he has given me completes the chain of events which I have prayed for and sought for many, many years." ♦

FICTION

# THE LAST DAYS OF MUHAMMAD ATTA

BY MARTIN AMIS

MON A00
120 T L
120 T L
MON A00
120 T L
120 T L

No physical, documentary, or analytical evidence provides a convincing explanation of why [Muhammad] Atta and [Abdulaziz al] Omari drove to Portland, Maine, from Boston on the morning of September 10, only to return to Logan on Flight 5930 on the morning of September 11.—"The 9/11 Commission Report."

## I

On September 11, 2001, he opened his eyes at 4 A.M., in Portland, Maine; and Muhammad Atta's last day began.

What was the scene of this awakening? A room in a hotel, of the type designated as "budget" in his guidebook— one step up from "basic." It was a Repose Inn, part of a chain. But it wasn't like the other Repose Inns he had lodged at: brisk, hygienic establishments. This place was ponderous and labyrinthine, and as elderly as most of its clientele. And it was cheap. So. The padded nylon bedcover as weighty as a lead vest; the big cuboid television on the dresser opposite; and the dented white fridge—where, as it happened, Muhammad Atta's reason for coming to Portland, Maine, lay cooling on a shelf. . . . The particular frugality of these final weeks was part of a peer-group piety contest that he was laconically going along with. Like the others, he was attending to his prayers, disbursing his alms, washing often, eating little, sleeping little. (But he wasn't like the others.) Days earlier, their surplus operational funds—about twenty-six thousand dollars—had been abstemiously wired back to the go-between in Dubai.

He slid from the bed and called Abdulaziz, who was already stirring, and perhaps already praying, next door. Then to the bathroom: the chore of ablution, the ordeal of excretion, the torment of depilation. He activated the shower nozzle and removed his undershorts. He stepped within, submitting to the cold and clammy caress of the plastic curtain on his calf and thigh. Then he spent an unbelievably long time trying to remove a hair from the bar of soap. The alien strand kept changing its shape—question mark, infinity symbol—but stayed in place; and the bar of soap, no bigger than a matchbook when he began, barely existed when he finished. Next, as sometimes happens in these old, massive, and essentially well-intentioned and broad-handed hotels, the water gave a gulp and then turned, in an instant, from a tepid trickle to a molten blast; and as he struggled from the stall he trod on a leaking shampoo sachet and fell heavily and sharply on his coccyx. He had to kick himself out through the steam, and rasped his head on the shower's serrated metal sill. After a while he slowly climbed to his feet and stood there, hands on hips, eyes only lightly closed, head bowed, awaiting recovery. He dried himself with a thin white towel, catching a hangnail in its shine.

Now, emitting a sigh of unqualified grimness, he crouched on the bowl. He didn't even bother with his usual scowling and straining and shuddering, partly because his head felt dangerously engorged. More saliently, he had not moved his bowels since May. In general his upper body was impressively lean, from all the hours in the gym with the "muscle" Saudis; but now there was a solemn mound where his abdominals used to be, as taut and proud as a four-month pregnancy. Nor was this the only sequela. He had a feverish and unvarying ache, not in his gut but in his lower back, his pelvic saddle, and his scrotum. Every few minutes he was required to wait out an interlude of nausea, while disused gastric juices bubbled up in the sump of his throat. His breath smelled like a blighted river.

The worst was yet to come: shaving. Shaving was the worst because it necessarily involved him in the contemplation of his own face. He looked downward while he lathered his cheeks, but then the chin came up and there it was, revealed by the razor in vertical strips: the face of Muhammad Atta. A year ago, after Afghanistan, he had said goodbye to his beard. Tangled and oblong and slightly off-center, it had had the effect of softening the disgusted lineaments of his mouth, and it had wholly concealed the frank animus of his underbite. His insides were seized, but his face was somehow incontinent, or so Muhammad Atta felt. The detestation, the detestation of everything, was being sculpted on it, from within. He was amazed that he was still allowed to walk the streets, let alone enter a building or board a plane. Another day, one more day, and they wouldn't let him. Why didn't everybody point, why didn't they cringe, why didn't they run? And yet this face, by now almost comically malevolent, would soon be smiled at, and perfunctorily fussed over (his ticket was business class), by the doomed stewardess.

A hypothesis. If he stood down from the planes operation, and it went ahead without him (or if he somehow survived it), he would never again be able to travel by air in the United States or anywhere else—not by air, not by train, not by boat, not by bus. The profiling wouldn't need to be racial; it would be facial, merely. No sane man or woman would ever agree to be confined in his vicinity. With that face, growing more gangrenous by the day. And that name, the name he journeyed under, itself like a promise of vengeance: Muhammad Atta.

In the last decade, only one human being had taken obvious pleasure from setting eyes on him, and that was the Sheikh. It had happened at their introductory meeting, in Kandahar—where, within a matter of minutes, the Sheikh had appointed him operation leader. Muhammad Atta had known that the first thing he would be asked was whether he was prepared to die. But the Sheikh was smiling, almost with eyes of love, when he said it. "The question isn't necessary," he began. "I see the answer in your face."

The Colgan Air commuter flight to Logan was scheduled to leave at six. So he had an hour. He put on his clothes (the dark-blue shirt, the black slacks), and settled himself at the dresser, awkwardly, his legs out to one side. Two documents were before him. He yawned, then sneezed. While shaving, Muhammad Atta, for the first time in his life, had cut himself on the lip (the lower); with surprising speed the gash had settled into a convincing imitation of a cold sore. Much less unusually, he had also nicked the fleshy volute of his right nostril, releasing an apparently endless supply of blood; he kept having to get up and fetch more tissues, leaving behind him a paper trail of the stanched gouts. The themes of recurrence and prolongation, he sensed, were already beginning to associate themselves with his last day.

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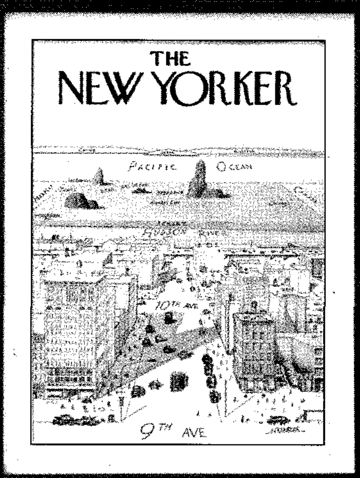

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the screen of his laptop. It was his last will and testament, composed in April, 1996, when the thoughts of the group had turned to Chechnya. Two Moroccan friends, Mounir and Abdelghani, both devout, had been his witnesses, so he had included a fair amount of formulaic sanctimony. Any old thing would do. "During my funeral, I want everyone to be quiet because God mentioned that he likes being quiet on three occasions, when you recite the Koran, during the funeral, and when you are crawling." Crawling? Had he mistyped? Another provision stared out at him, and further deepened his frown: "The person who will wash my body near my genitals must wear gloves on his hands so he won't touch my genitals." And this: "I don't want a pregnant woman or a person who is not clean to come and say goodbye to me because I don't approve of it." Well, these anxieties were now academic. No one would say goodbye to him. No one would wash him. No one would touch his genitals.

There was another document on the dresser's surface, a four-page booklet in Arabic, put together by the information office in Kandahar (and bound by a grimy tassel). Each of them had been given one; the others would often produce their personal copies and nod and sway and mutter over them for hour after hour. But Muhammad Atta wasn't like the others (and he was paying a price for it). He had barely glanced at the thing until now. "Pull your shoelaces tight and wear tight socks that grip the shoes and do not come out of them." He supposed that this was sound advice. "Let every one of you sharpen his knife and kill his animal and bring about comfort and relief of his slaughter." A reference, presumably, to what would happen to the pilots, the first officers, the flight attendants. Some of the Saudis, they said, had butchered sheep and camels at Khaldan, the training camp near Kabul. Muhammad Atta did not expect to relish that part of it: the exemplary use of the box cutters. He pictured the women, in their uniforms, in their open-necked shirts. He did *not* expect to like it; he did not expect to like death in that form.

Now he sat back, and felt the approach of nausea: it gathered round him, then sifted through him. His mind, inasmuch as it was separable from his body, was close to the "complete tranquillity" praised and recommended by Kandahar. A very different kind of thirty-three-year-old might have felt the same tranced surety while contemplating an afternoon in a borrowed apartment with his true love (and sexual obsession). But Muhammad Atta's mind and his body were not separable: this was the difficulty; this was the mind-body problem—in his case, fantastically acute. Muhammad Atta wasn't like the others, because he was doing what he was doing for the core reason. The others were doing what they were doing for the core reason, too, but they had achieved sublimation, by means of jihadi ardor; and their bodies had been convinced by this arrangement and had gone along with it. They ate, drank, smoked, smiled, snored; they took the stairs two at a time. Muhammad Atta's body had not gone along with it. He was doing what he was doing for the core reason and for the core reason only.

"Purify your heart and cleanse it of stains. Forget and be oblivious of the thing which is called World." Muhammad Atta was not religious; he was not even especially political. He had allied himself with the militants because jihad was, by many magnitudes, the most charismatic idea of his generation. To unite ferocity and rectitude in a single word: nothing could compete with that. He played along with it, and did the things that impressed his peers; he collected citations, charities, pilgrimages, conspiracy theories, and so on, as other people collected autographs or beer mats. And it suited his character. If you took away all the rubbish about faith, then fundamentalism suited his character, and with an almost sinister precision.

For example, the attitude toward women: the blend of extreme hostility and extreme wariness he found highly congenial. In addition, he liked the idea of the brotherhood, although of course he thoroughly despised the current contingent, particularly his fellow-pilots: Hani (the Pentagon) he barely knew, but he was continuously enraged by Marwan (the other Twin Tower) and almost fascinated by the pitch of his loathing for Ziad (the Capitol). . . . Adultery punished by whipping, sodomy by burial alive: this seemed about right to Muhammad Atta. He also joined in the hatred of music. And the hatred of laughter. "Why do you never laugh?" he and the others were sometimes asked. Ziad would answer, "How can you laugh when people are dying in Palestine?" Muhammad Atta never laughed, not because people were dying in Palestine but because he found nothing funny. *The thing which is called World.* That, too, spoke to him. World had always felt like an illusion—an unreal mockery.

"The time between you and your marriage in heaven is very short." Ah, yes, the virgins: six dozen of them—half a gross. He had read in a news magazine that "virgins," in the holy book, was a mistranslation from the Aramaic. It should be "raisins." He idly wondered whether the quibble might have something to do with "sultana," which meant (a) a small seedless raisin, and (b) the wife or concubine of a sultan. Abdulaziz, Marwan, Ziad, and the others: they would not be best pleased, on their arrival in the Garden, to find a little red packet of Sun-Maid Sultanas (Average Contents 72). Muhammad Atta, with his two degrees in architecture, his excellent English, his excellent German: Muhammad Atta did not believe in the virgins, did not believe in the Garden. (How could he believe in such an implausibly, and dauntingly, priapic paradise?) He was an apostate: that's what he was. He didn't expect paradise. What he expected was oblivion. And, strange to say, he would find neither.

He packed. He paused and stooped over the dented refrigerator, then straightened up and headed for the door.

In its descent the elevator, with a succession of long-suffering sighs, stopped at the twelfth, the eleventh, the tenth, the ninth, the eighth, the seventh, the sixth, the fifth, the fourth, the third, and the second floors. Old people, their faces flickering with distrust, inched in and out; while they did so, one of their number would press the open-doors button with a defiant, Marfanic thumb. And at this hour, too: it was barely light. Muhammad Atta briefly horrified himself with the notion that they were all lovers, returning early to their beds. But no: it must be the sleeplessness, the insomnia of age—the dawn vigils of age. Their efforts to stay alive, in any case, struck him as essentially ignoble. He had felt the same way in the hospital the night before, when he went to see the imam. . . . Consulting his watch every ten or fifteen seconds, he decided that this downward journey was dead time, as dead as time could get, like queueing, or an interminable red light, or staring stupidly at the baggage on an airport carrousel. He stood there, hemmed in by pallor and decay, and martyred by compound revulsions.

Abdulaziz was waiting for him in the weak glow and piped music of the lobby. Wordless, breakfastless, they joined the line for checkout. More dead time passed. As they fell into step and proceeded through the last of the night to the parking lot, Muhammad Atta, in no very generous spirit, considered his colleague. This particular muscle Saudi seemed as limply calflike as Ahmed al Nami—the prettyboy in Ziad's platoon. On the other hand, Abdulaziz, with his softly African face, his childish eyes, was almost insultingly easy to dominate. He had a wife and a daughter in southern Saudi Arabia. But this was like saying that he had a flatbed truck in southern Saudi Arabia, so little did it appear to weigh on him. He had also, incredibly, performed certain devotional duties at his local mosque. And yet it was Abdulaziz who carried the knife, Abdulaziz who was ready to apply it to the flesh of the stewardess.

When they reached their car Abdulaziz said a few words in praise of God, adding, with some attempt at panache, "So. Let us begin our 'architectural studies.' "

Muhammad Atta felt his body give an involuntary jolt. "Who told you?" he said.

"Ziad."

They loaded up and then bent themselves into the front seats.

Abdulaziz wasn't supposed to know about that—about the target code. "Law"

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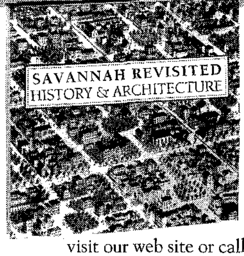

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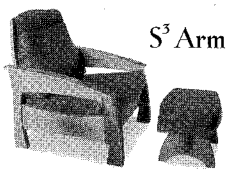

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was the Capitol. "Politics" was the White House. In the discussions with the Sheikh there had been firm concurrence about "architecture" (the World Trade Center) and "arts" (the Pentagon), but they had disagreed about an altogether different kind of target, namely "electrical engineering." This was the nuclear power plant that Muhammad Atta had seen on one of his training flights near New York. Puzzlingly, the Sheikh had withheld his blessing—despite the presumably attractive possibility of turning large swathes of the Eastern seaboard into a plutonium cemetery for the next seventy millennia (that is, until the year 72001). The Sheikh gave his reasons (restricted airspace, no "symbolic value"). But Muhammad Atta sensed a moral qualm, a silent suggestion that such a move could be considered exorbitant. It was the first and only indication that, in their cosmic war against God's enemies, there was any kind of upper limit. Muhammad Atta often asked himself: Was the *Sheikh* prepared to die? In the course of their conversations it had emerged that the Sheikh, while plainly reconciled to eventual martyrdom (he would have it no other way, and so on), felt little personal attraction to death; and he would soon be additionally famous, Muhammad Atta prophesied, for the strenuousness with which he eluded it.

These meetings and discussions—with the Sheikh and, later, with his Yemeni emissary, Ramzi bin al-Shibh—now lost weight and value in Muhammad Atta's mind, tarnished by Ziad's indiscipline, by Ziad's promiscuity (and, if Abdulaziz knew, then all the Saudis knew). He thought back to his historic conversation with Ramzi, on the telephone, in the third week of August.

"Our friend is anxious to know when your course will begin."

"It would be more interesting to study 'law' when Congress has convened."

"But we shouldn't delay. With so many of our students in the U.S. . . ."

"All right. Two branches, an oblique stroke, and a lollipop."

Ramzi called him back and said, "To be clear. The eleventh of the ninth?"

"Yes," Muhammad Atta confirmed. And he was the first person on earth to say it—to say in that way: "September eleventh."

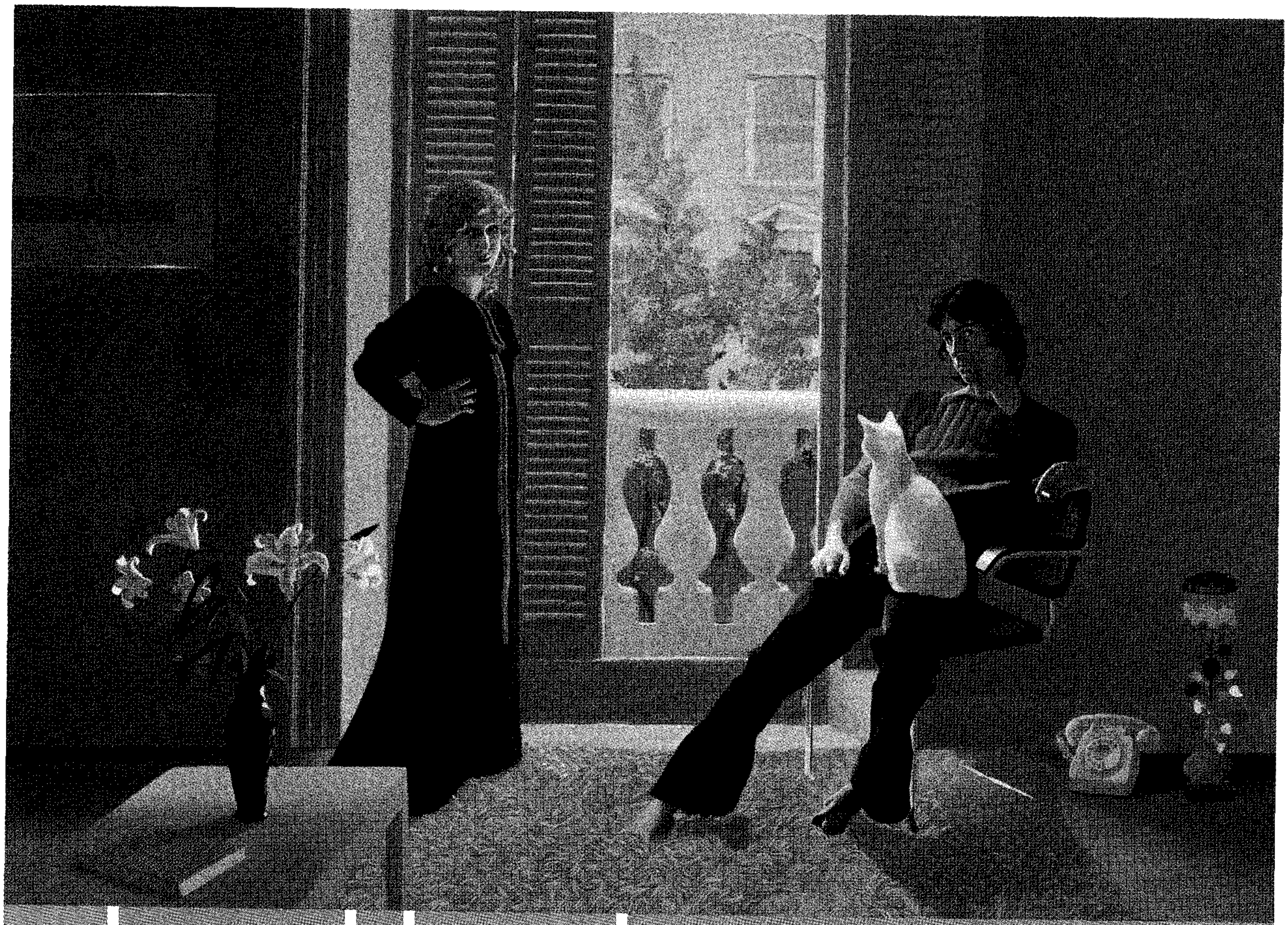
He had cherished the secret until September 9th. Now, of course, everyone knew: the day itself had come. He was impatient for his talk on the phone with Ziad, which was scheduled for 7 A.M. Ziad was still claiming that he hadn't decided between "law" and "politics." It looked like "law." As a target, the President's house had lost much of its appeal when they'd established, insofar as they could, that the President wouldn't be *in* it.

At that moment the President was readying himself for an early-morning run in Sarasota, Florida, where Muhammad Atta had been taught how to fly, at Jones Aviation, in September, 2000.

It was during the drive to Portland International Jetport that the headache began. In recent months he had become something of a connoisseur of headaches. And yet those earlier headaches, it now seemed, were barely worth the name: *this* was what a headache was. At first he attributed its virulence to his misadventure in the shower stall; but then the pain pushed forward over his crown and established itself, like an electric eel, from ear to ear, then from eye to eye—and then both. He had two headaches, not one, and they were apparently at war. The automobile, a Nissan Altima, was brand-new, factory-fresh, and this had seemed like a mild bonus on September 10th, but now its vacuum-packed breath tasted of seasickness and the smell of ships below the waterline. Suddenly his vision became pixellated with little swarms of blind spots. So it was then required of him to pull over and tell an astonished Abdulaziz to take the wheel.

There seemed to be a completely unreasonable weight of traffic. Americans, already about their business . . . Tormenting his passenger with regular glances of concern, Abdulaziz otherwise drove with his usual superstitious watchfulness, beset by small fears, on this day. Muhammad Atta tried not to writhe around in his seat; on his way to the parking lot, ten minutes earlier, he had tried not to run; in the elevator, ten minutes earlier still, he had tried not to groan or scream. He was always trying not to do something.

It was 5:35. And at this point he began to belabor himself for the diversion to Portland: a puerile undertaking, as he now saw it. His group was competitive not only in piety but also in nihilistic élan, in nihilistic insouciance; and he had thought it would be conclusively stylish to stroll from one end of Logan to the other with less than an hour to go. Then, too, there was the promise, itchier to the heart than ever,



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of his conversation with Ziad. But his reason for coming to Portland had been fundamentally unserious. He wouldn't have done it if the Internet, on September 10th, had not assured him so repeatedly that it was going to be a flawless morning on September 11th.

And he didn't solace himself with the thought that this was, after all, September 11th, and you could still get to airports without much time to spare.

"Did you pack these bags yourself?" Muhammad Atta's hand crept toward his brow. "Yes," he said.

"Have they been with you at all times?"

"Yes."

"Did anyone ask you to carry anything for them?"

"No. Is the flight on time?"

"You should make your connection."

"And the bags will go straight through?"

"No, sir. You'll need to recheck them at Logan."

"You mean I'll have to go through all this *again*?"

Whatever else terrorism had achieved in the past few decades, it had certainly brought about a net increase in world boredom. It didn't take very long to ask and answer those three questions—about fifteen seconds. But those dead-time questions and answers were repeated, without any variation whatever, hundreds of thousands of times a day. If the planes operation went ahead as planned, Muhammad Atta would bequeath more, perhaps much more, dead time, planetwide. It was appropriate, perhaps, and not paradoxical, that terror should also sharply promote its most obvious opposite. Boredom.

As it happened, Muhammad Atta was a selectee of the Computer-Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS). All this meant was that his checked bag would not be stowed until he himself had boarded the aircraft. This was at Portland. At Logan, a "Category X" airport like Newark Liberty and Washington Dulles, and supposedly more secure, three of his muscle Saudis would be selected by CAPPS, with the same irrelevant consequences.

Muhammad Atta and Abdulaziz submitted to the checkpoint screening. Their bags were not searched; they were not frisked, or blessed by the hand wand. Abdulaziz's childish rucksack, containing the box cutters and the Mace, passed through the tunnel of love. Just before they boarded, another pall of nausea gathered about Muhammad Atta, like a host of tiny myrmidons. He waited for them to move on, but they did not do so, and, instead, coagulated in his craw. Muhammad Atta went to the men's room and released a fathom of bilious green. He was still wiping his foul mouth as he walked out onto the tarmac and climbed the trembling metal steps.

Colgan 5930 was not only late: it was also an open-propeller nineteen-seater, and it was full. Excruciatingly, he had to wedge himself in next to a fat blonde with a scalp disease and, moreover, a baby, whose incredulous weeping (its ears) she attempted and failed to slake with repeated applications of the breast. Between heartbeats, when he was briefly capable of consecutive thought, he imagined that the blonde was the doomed stewardess.

The plane leapt eagerly into the air, with none of the technological toil that would characterise the ascent of American 11.

He had gone to Portland, Maine, for his quid pro quo with the imam.

The hospital, where he lay dying, was a blistered medium-rise downtown: one more business among all the other businesses. Inside, too, Muhammad Atta had had no sense of entering an atmosphere of vocational care—just the American matter-of-factness, with no softening of the voice, the tread, no softening of the receptionists' minimal smiles. . . . Directed to the ward, he moved through the moist warmth of half-eaten or untouched dinners and the heavier undersmell of drugs. The imam was asleep in his bed, recessed into it, as if an imam-size channel had been recessed into the mattress. His lips, Muhammad Atta noticed, were dark gray, like the lips of dogs. Dead time passed. Then the imam awoke to Muhammad Atta's humorless stare. He sighed, without restraint. The two of them went back a way: to the mosque in Falls Church, Virginia.

"You have a citation for me?" the imam asked, unexpectedly alert.

"It's from the traditions. The Prophet said, 'Whoever kills himself with a blade

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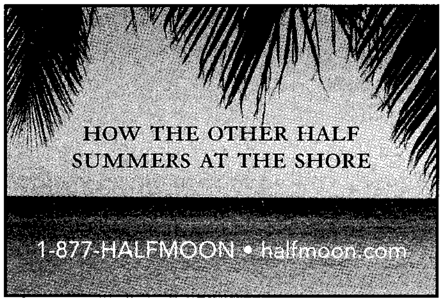
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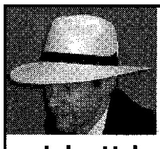
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will be tormented with that blade in the fires of Hell. . . . He who throws himself off a mountain and kills himself will throw himself downward into the fires of Hell for ever and ever. . . . Whoever kills himself in any way in this world will be tormented in that way in Hell.' "

"Always there are exceptions. Remember we are in the lands of unbelief," the imam said, and went on to list the crimes of the Americans.

These were familiar to his visitor, who regarded the grievances as real. Depending on how you tallied it, America was responsible for this or that many million deaths. But Muhammad Atta was not persuaded of a moral equivalence. Certain weapons systems claimed to be precise; power was not precise. Power was always a monster. And there had never been a monster the size of America. Every time it turned over in its sleep it entrained disasters that would have to roll through villages. There were blunderings and perversities and calculated cruelties; and there was no self-knowledge—none. Still, America did not expend *ingenuity* in its efforts to kill the innocent.

"Is it an enemy installation?" the imam was sharply asking.

Muhammad Atta gave no reply. He just said, "Do you have it?"

"Yes. And you will need it."

The imam's hand, to Muhammad Atta's far from sympathetic gaze, looked and sounded like the foreclaw of a lobster as it rattled up against the laminate of his bedside table; the cupboard opened, drawbridge-wise. The thing within exactly resembled a half-empty sixteen-ounce bottle of Volvic.

"Take it, not on waking, but when you feel your trial is near. Now. You were kind enough to say that you would describe your induction."

Here was the quid pro quo: he wanted to be told about the Sheikh. Just then the imam abruptly turned onto his side, facing Muhammad Atta, and for a moment his posture repulsively recalled that of a child starting to warm to a bedtime story. But this lurch was only part of a larger maneuver of the imam's. He edged himself backward and upward, so that a few stray hairs, at least, rested on the pillow.

Muhammad Atta had unthinkingly assumed, earlier on, that he would give the imam a reassuring, even an idealized, portrait of the Sheikh—the long-fingered visionary on the mountaintop who yet, in his humility and openness, remained a simple warrior of God. Now he recomposed himself. Never in his life had he spoken his mind. The smell of drugs was particularly strong near the yellow sink, half a yard from his nose.

"I had several meetings with him," he said, "at the al Faruq camp, in Kandahar. And at Tarnak Farms. He casts the spell of success on you—that's what he does. When he talks about the defeat of the Russians . . . To hear him tell it, it wasn't the West that won the Cold War. It was the Sheikh. But we badly need that spell, don't we? The spell of success."

"But the successes are real. And this is only the beginning."

"His hopes of victory depend," Muhammad Atta said, "on the active participation of the superpower."

"What superpower?"

"God. Hence the present crisis."

"Meaning?"

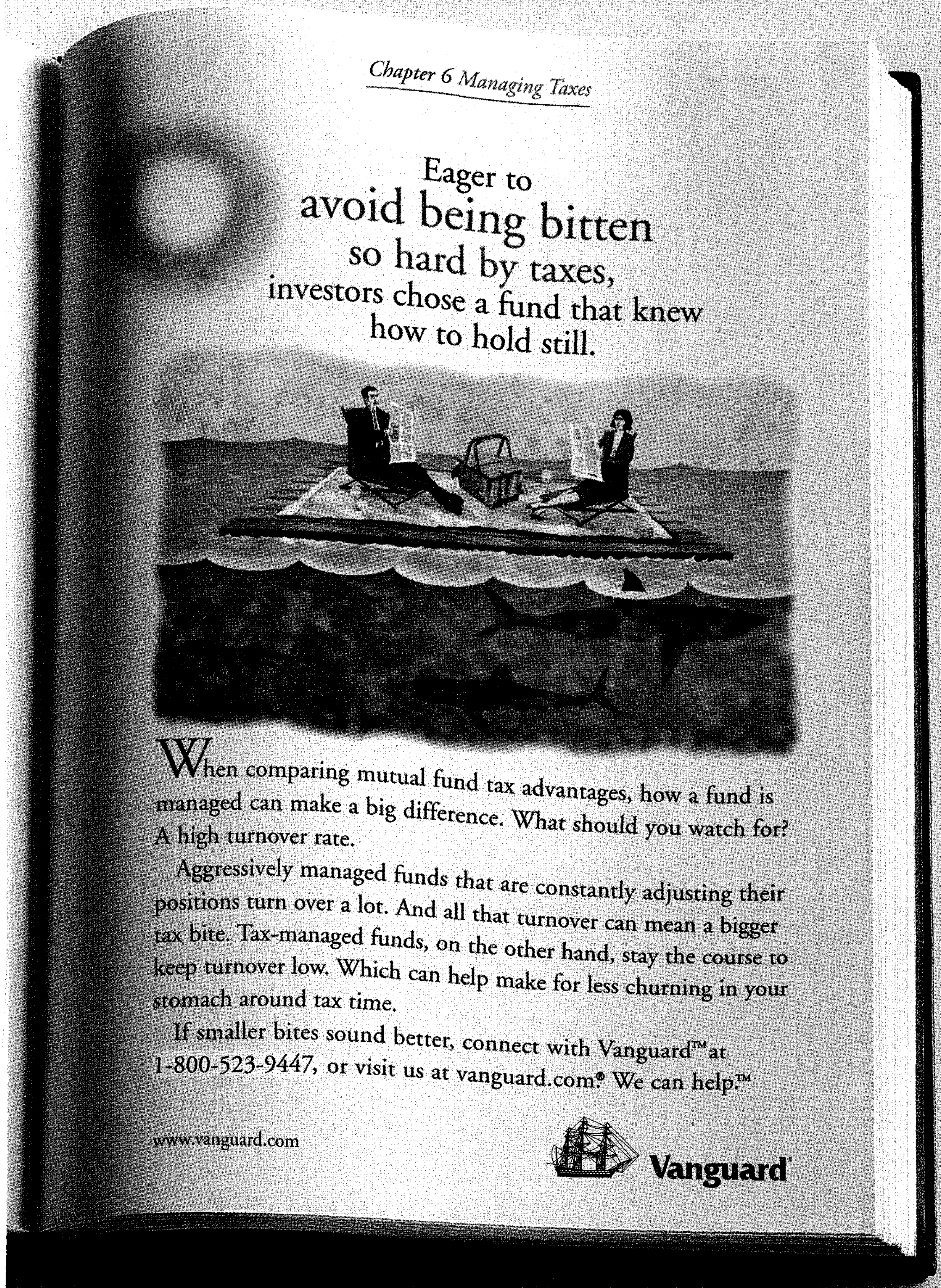
"It comes from religious hurt, don't you think? For centuries God has forsaken the believers, and rewarded the infidels. How do you explain his indifference?"

Or his enmity, he thought, as he left the bedside and the ward. He considered, too, that it could go like this, subconsciously, of course: if prayer and piety had failed—had so clearly failed—then it might seem time to change allegiance, and summon up the other powers.

*"You remind me of myself—you know—a while ago."*

At Logan, he and Abdulaziz were the only passengers at the carrousel supposedly serving the commuter flight from Portland. And the carrousel was silent and motionless. Staring at a carrousel with actual baggage going around on it suddenly seemed a fairly stimulating thing to do. Meanwhile, the eels or stingrays in his head were having a fight to the death in the area just behind his ears. Sometimes for moments on end he could step back from the pain and just *listen* to it. This was music in its next evolutionary phase, beyond the atonal. And he realized why he had always hated music; all of it, even the most emollient melody, had entered his mind as pain. Using every reserve, he continued to stare at the changeless slats of black rubber for another thirty seconds, another minute, then he turned on his heel, and Abdulaziz followed.

"Did you pack these bags yourself?"



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"*What* bags? As I took the trouble to explain . . ."

"Sir, your bags will be on our next flight. I still need to ask the security questions, sir."

Americans—the way they called you "sir." They might as well be calling you "bub."

"Did you pack these bags yourself?"

Oh, the misery of recurrence, like the hotel elevator doing its ancient curtsy on every floor, like the alien hair on the soap changing its shape through a succession of alphabets, like the (necessarily) monotonous gonging inside his head. It had occurred to him before that his condition, if you could call it that, was merely the condition of boredom, unbounded boredom, where all time was dead time. As if his whole life consisted of answering those same three questions, saying "Yes" and "Yes" and "No."

"And did anyone ask you to carry anything for them?"

"*Yes*," Muhammad Atta said. "Last night, at the Lebanese restaurant, a waiter asked us to take a heavy clock radio to his cousin in Los Angeles."

Her smile was flat and brief. "That's funny," she said.

They made their way to Gate 32 and then retreated from it, into the mall. With a flip of the hand he told Abdulaziz to go and look for his countrymen. Muhammad Atta took a seat outside a dormant coffee shop and readied himself for the call to Ziad. Ziad: the Beiruti beach boy and disco ghost, the tippler and debauchee, now with his exaltations and prostrations, his chanting and wailing, his rocking and swaying . . . To discountenance Ziad, to send him to his death with a heart full of doubt: *this* was the reason for the delegation to Maine.

Back in Germany, once, Ziad had said that the brides in the Garden would be "made of light." In bold contrast, then, to the darkness and heaviness of their terrestrial sisters, in particular the heaviness and darkness of Aysel Senguen—Ziad's German Turk, or Turkish German. Muhammad Atta had seen Aysel only once (bare legs, bare arms, bare hair), in the medical bookstore in Hamburg, and he had not forgotten her face. Ziad and Aysel were his control experiment for the life lived by sexual love; and for many months the two of them had peopled his insomnias. He knew that Aysel had come to Florida in January (and had scandalously accompanied Ziad to the flight school); he was also obscurely moved by the fact that a letter to her was Ziad's last will and testament. And he kept wondering how their bodies conjoined, how she must open herself up to him, with all her heaviness and darkness. . . . Muhammad Atta had decided that romantic and religious ardor came from contiguous parts of the human being: the parts he didn't have. Yet Ziad, as the obliterator of "law" (and the obliterator of United 93), was duly poised for mass murder. Only *roughly* contiguous, then: Ziad could say that he was doing it for God, and many would believe him, but he couldn't say that he was doing it for love. He wasn't doing it for love, or for God. He was doing it for the core reason, just like Muhammad Atta.

"All is well at Newark Liberty?"

"All is well. We're in the sterile area. Did you see your precious imam?"

"I did. And he gave me the water."

"The water? What water?"

"The holy water," Muhammad Atta said with delectation, "from the Oasis."

There was a silence. "What does it do?" Ziad asked.

"It absolves you of what the imam called the 'enormity,' the atrocious crime, Ziad, of the self-felony."

There was another silence—but that wasn't quite true anymore. Muhammad Atta thought that he might be getting more out of this conversation if there hadn't been a mechanized floor-sweeper, resembling a hovercraft, with an old man on it, beeping and snivelling around his chair.

"I'm preparing to drink the holy water even as I speak."

"Does it come in a special bottle?"

"A crystal vial. God said, 'All those who hate me love and court death.' You see, Ziad, you are the trustee of your body, not its owner. God is its owner."

"And the water?"

"The water is within me and preserves me for God. It's a new technique—it began in Palestine. Your hell will burn with jet fuel for eternity. And eternity never ends, Ziad—it never even begins. So there may be some delay before you get those brides of light. Perhaps you should have settled for your German nudist. Goodbye, Ziad."

He hung up, redialled, and had a more or less identical conversation with Marwan, minus the theme of Aysel. In the case of Marwan (the other half of "architecture," and just across the way, now, at United), different considerations obtained. The emphasis of their rivalry was not jihadi ardor so much as nihilistic insouciance. So the two of them exchanged yawning boasts, in code, about how low down, and at what angle, they would strike, and coolly agreed that, if there were F-15s over New York, they would crash their planes into the streets. . . . Finally, dutifully, he called Hani ("arts"), the only Saudi pilot, with whom he shared no history, and not much hatred. Muhammad Atta hoped that he hadn't decisively undermined Ziad, who, after all, was a Saudi short (or two Saudis short, if you discounted the punklike Ahmed). No. He believed that he could safely rely, at this point, on the fierce physics of the peer group.

A peer group piously competitive about suicide, he had concluded, was a very powerful thing, and the West had no equivalent to it. A peer group for whom death was not death—and life was not life, either. Yet an inversion so extreme, he thought, would quickly become decadent: hospitals, schools, nurseries, old people's homes. Transgression, by its nature, was helter-skelter, and always bound to escalate. And the thing would start to be over in a generation, as everyone slowly and incredulously intuited it: the core reason.

Perhaps the closest equivalent the West could field was the firefighters. Muhammad Atta had studied architecture and engineering. The fire that would be created by ten thousand gallons of jet fuel, he knew, could not be fought: the steel frame of the tower would buckle; the walls, which were not intended to be weight-bearing, would collapse, one onto another; and down it would all come. The fire could not be fought—but there would be firefighters. They were called the "bravest," accurately, in his view; and, as the bravest, they took on a certain responsibility. The firefighters were saying, every day, Who's going to do it, if we don't? If the bravest don't, who else is going to risk death to save the lives of strangers?

As he sat for another few moments on the tin chair, as he watched the mall awaken and come into commercial being, filling up now with Americans and American purpose and automatic self-belief, he felt he had timed it about right. (And his face had timed it about right.) Because he couldn't possibly survive another day of the all-inclusive detestation—of the pan-anathema. This feeling had been his familiar since the age of twelve or thirteen; it had come upon him, like an illness without a symptom. Cairo, Hamburg, even the winter dawn over Kandahar: they had all looked the same to him. Unreal mockery.

Muhammad Atta took the bottle from his carry-on. The imam *said* it was from Medina. He shrugged, and drank the holy Volvic.

Boarding began with first class. And, if Muhammad Atta ever found anything funny, he might have smiled at this: Wail and Waleed, the brothers, the two semiliterate yokels from the badlands of the Yemeni border, shuffling off to their thrones—2A and 2B. Then business. He led. Abdulaziz and Satam followed.

He hadn't even reached his seat when it hit him. It came with great purity of address, replacing everything else in his stretched sensorium. Even his headache, while not actually taking its leave, immediately stepped aside, almost with a flourish, to accommodate the new guest. It was a feeling that had abandoned him forever, he'd thought, four months ago—but now it was back. With twinkly promptitude, canned music flooded forth: a standard ballad, a flowery flute with many trills and graces. The breathy refrain joined the simmer of the engines; yet neither could drown the popping, the groaning, the creaking, as of a dungeon door to an inner sanctum—the ungainsayable anger of his bowels.

So now he sat gripping the armrests of 8D as the coach passengers filed by. Why did there have to be so many of them, always another briefcase, another backpack, always another buzz cut, another white-hair? . . . He waited, rose, and with gruelling nonchalance, his buttocks clenched, sauntered forward. All three toilets claimed to be occupied. They were not occupied, he knew. A frequent and in-

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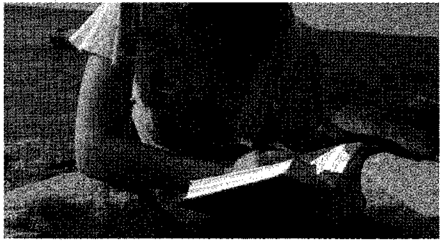

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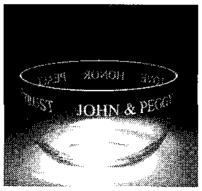

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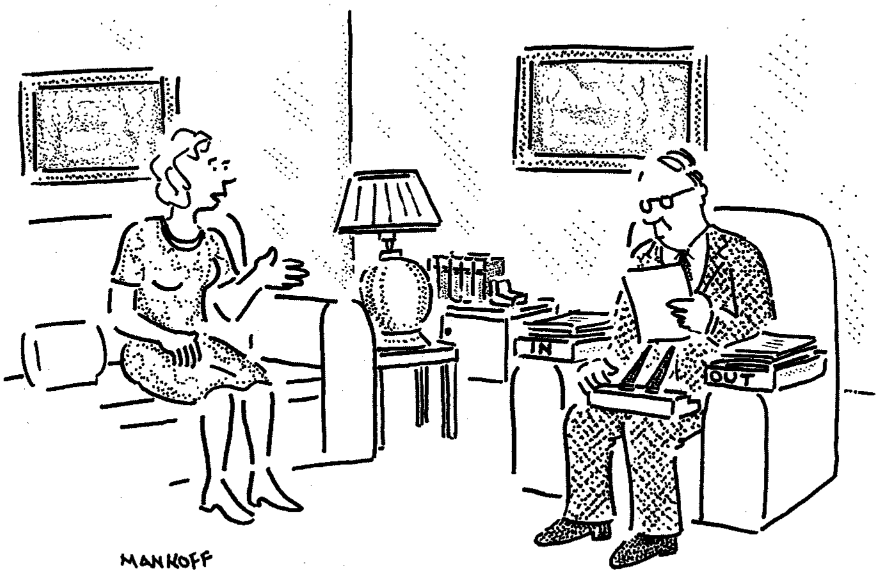


"Honey, you're home."

quisitive traveller on American commercial jets, Muhammad Atta knew that the toilets were locked, like all the other toilets (this was the practice on tight turnarounds), and would remain locked until the plane levelled out. He pressed a flat hand against all three: again, the misery of recurrence, of duplication. He tried, but he couldn't abstain from a brief flurry of shoving and kicking and rattling. As he returned to 8D he saw that Abdulaziz was looking at him, not with commiseration, now, but with puzzled disappointment, even turning in his seat to exchange a responsible frown with Satam.

Strapped in, Muhammad Atta managed the following series of thoughts. You *needed* the belief system, the ideology, the ardor. You had to have it. The core reason was good enough for the mind. But it couldn't carry the body.

To the others, he realized, he was giving a detailed impersonation of a man who had lost his nerve. But he had not lost his nerve. Even before the plane gave its preliminary jolt (like a polite cough of introduction), he felt the pull of it, with relief, with recognition: the necessary speed, the escape velocity he needed to deliver him to his journey's end.

American 11 pushed back from Gate 32, Terminal B, at 7:40. There was the captain and the first officer; there were nine flight attendants, and seventy-six passengers, including Wail, Waleed, Satam, Abdulaziz, and Muhammad Atta. American 11 was in the air at 7:59.

Now he obliged himself to do what he had always intended to do, during the climb. He had a memory ready, and a thought experiment. He wanted to prepare himself for the opening of female flesh; he wanted to prepare himself for what would soon be happening to the throat of the stewardess—whom he could see, on her jump seat, head bowed low, with a pen in her hand and a clipboard on her lap.

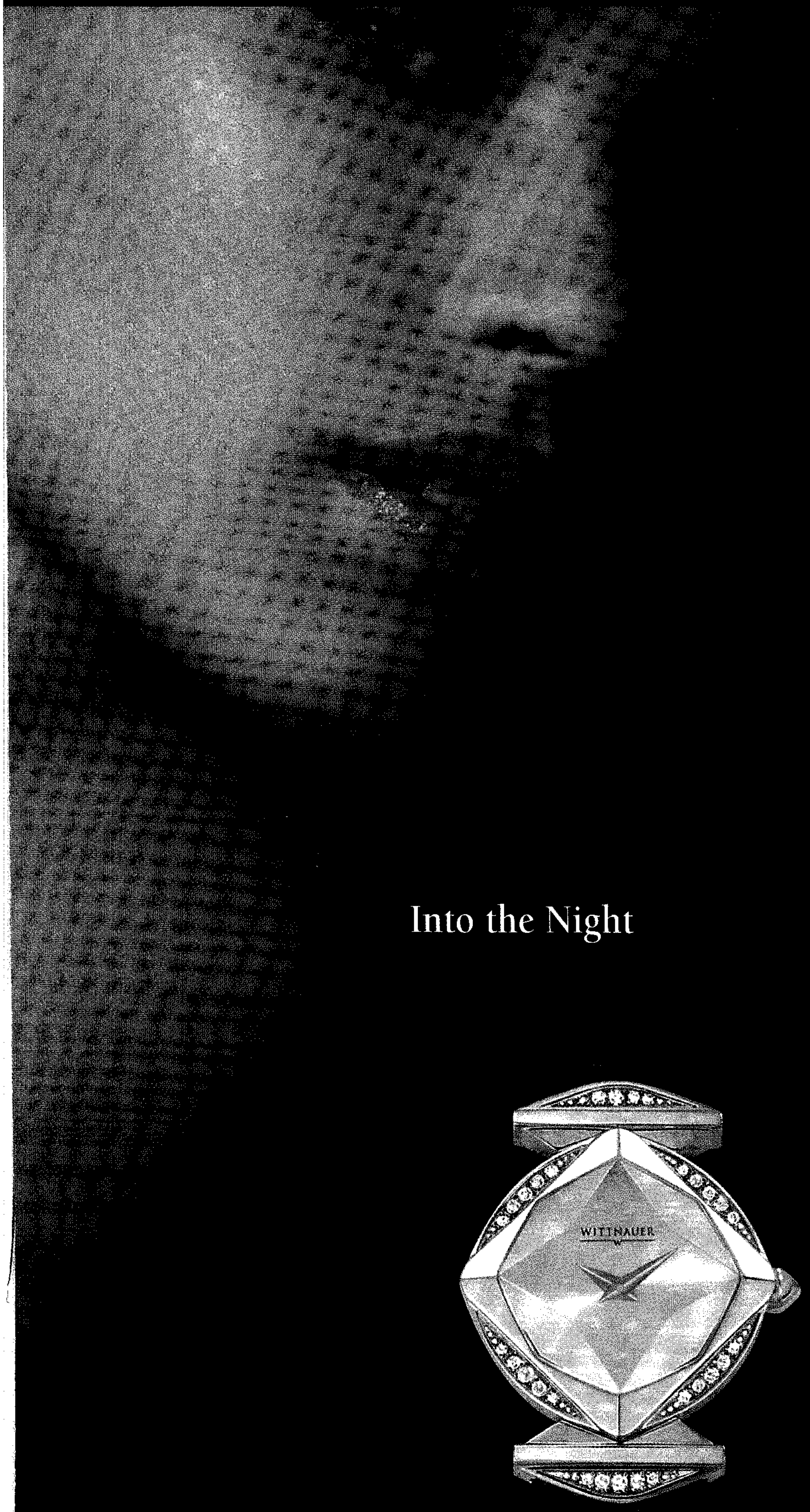
In 2000 his return ticket from Afghanistan had put him on an Iberia flight from the United Arab Emirates to Madrid. The plane had just levelled out when he became aware of an altercation in the back of the cabin. Swivelling in his seat, he saw that perhaps fifteen or sixteen men, turbanned and white-robed, had crowded into the aisle and were now on the floor, humped in prayer. You could hear the male flight attendant's monotonous and defeated remonstrations as he backed away. "*Por favor, señores. Es ilegal. Señores, por favor!*" Minutes later the captain came on the P.A., saying in Spanish, English, and Gulf Arabic that if the passengers didn't return to their seats he would most certainly return to Dubai. Then she appeared. Even Muhammad Atta at once conceded that here was the dark female in her most swinishly luxurious form: tall, long-necked, herself streamlined and aerodynamic, with hair like a billboard for a chocolate sundae, and all that flesh, damp and glowing as if from fever or even lust. She came to a halt and gave a roll of the eyes that took her whole head with it, then she surged forward with great scooping motions of her hands, bellowing, "*Vamos arriba, coño!*" And the kneeling men had to peer out at this seraph of breast and haunch and uniformed power, and straighten up and scowl, and slowly grope for their seats. Muhammad Atta had felt only contempt for the men bent over the patterned carpet, but he would never forget the face of the stewardess—the face of cloudless entitlement—and how badly he had wanted to hurt it.

And yet—no, it wasn't going to work. For him, the combination, up close, was wholly unmanageable: the combination of women and blood. So far, he thought, this is the worst day of my life—provably the worst day. In his head the weary fight between the vermin was finished; one was dying, and was now being disgustingly eaten by the other. And his loins, between them, were contriving for him something very close to the sensation of anal rape. So far, this was the worst day of his life. But then every day was the worst day, because every day was the most recent day, and the most developed, the most advanced (with all those other days behind it) toward the pan-anathema.

The plane was flattening out. He waited for the order. This would be given by the captain, when he turned off the fasten-seatbelts sign.

"*We have some planes,*" Muhammad Atta said coolly. "*Just stay quiet, and you'll be O.K. We are returning to the airport. Nobody move. Everything will be O.K. If you try to make any moves, you'll endanger yourself and the airplane. Just stay quiet.*"

He had stepped through the region of inexpressible sordor, and gained the cockpit. Here, in the grotto of the mad clocksmith, was more cringing flesh and more blood—but manageably male. Now he disengaged the com-



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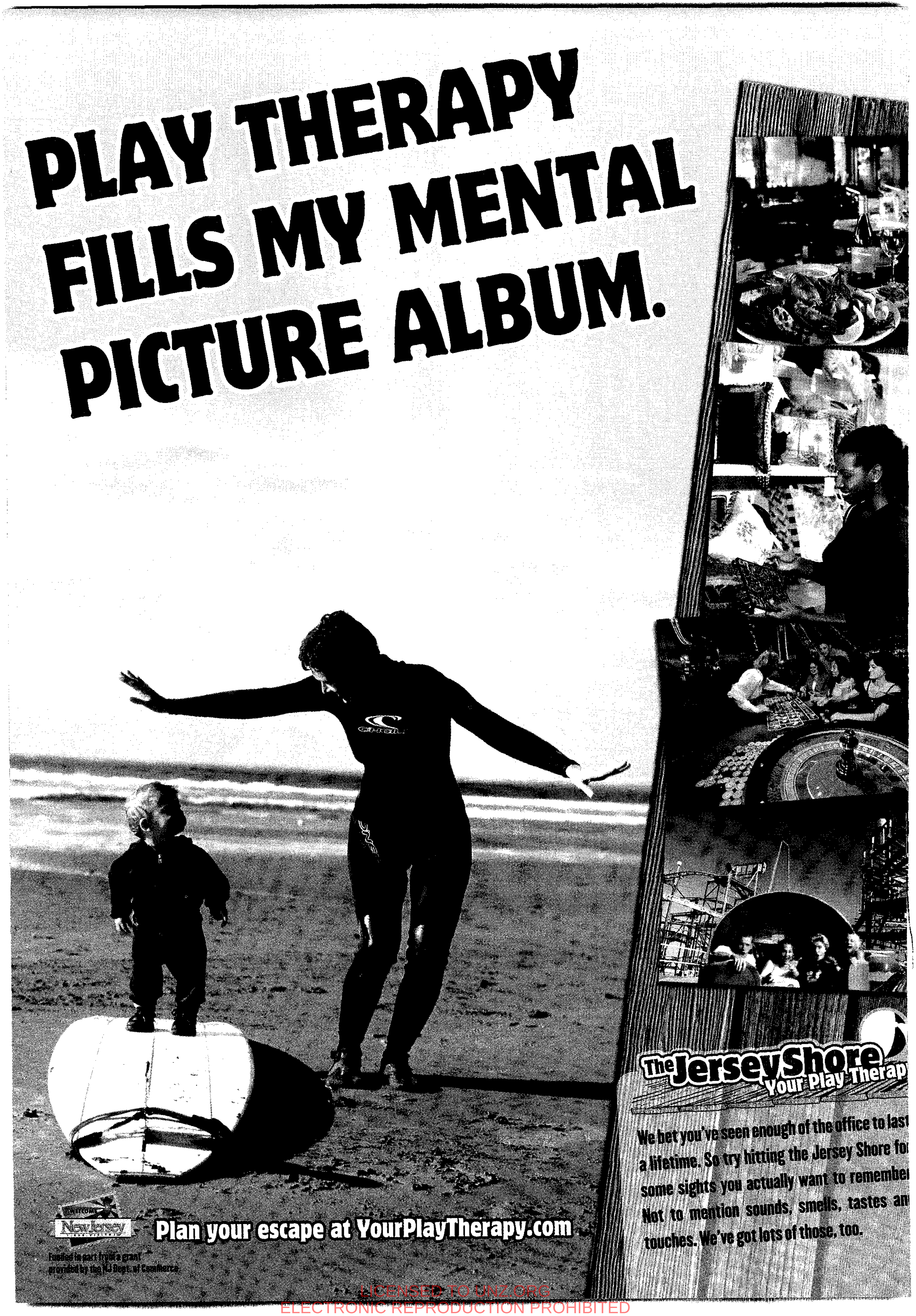
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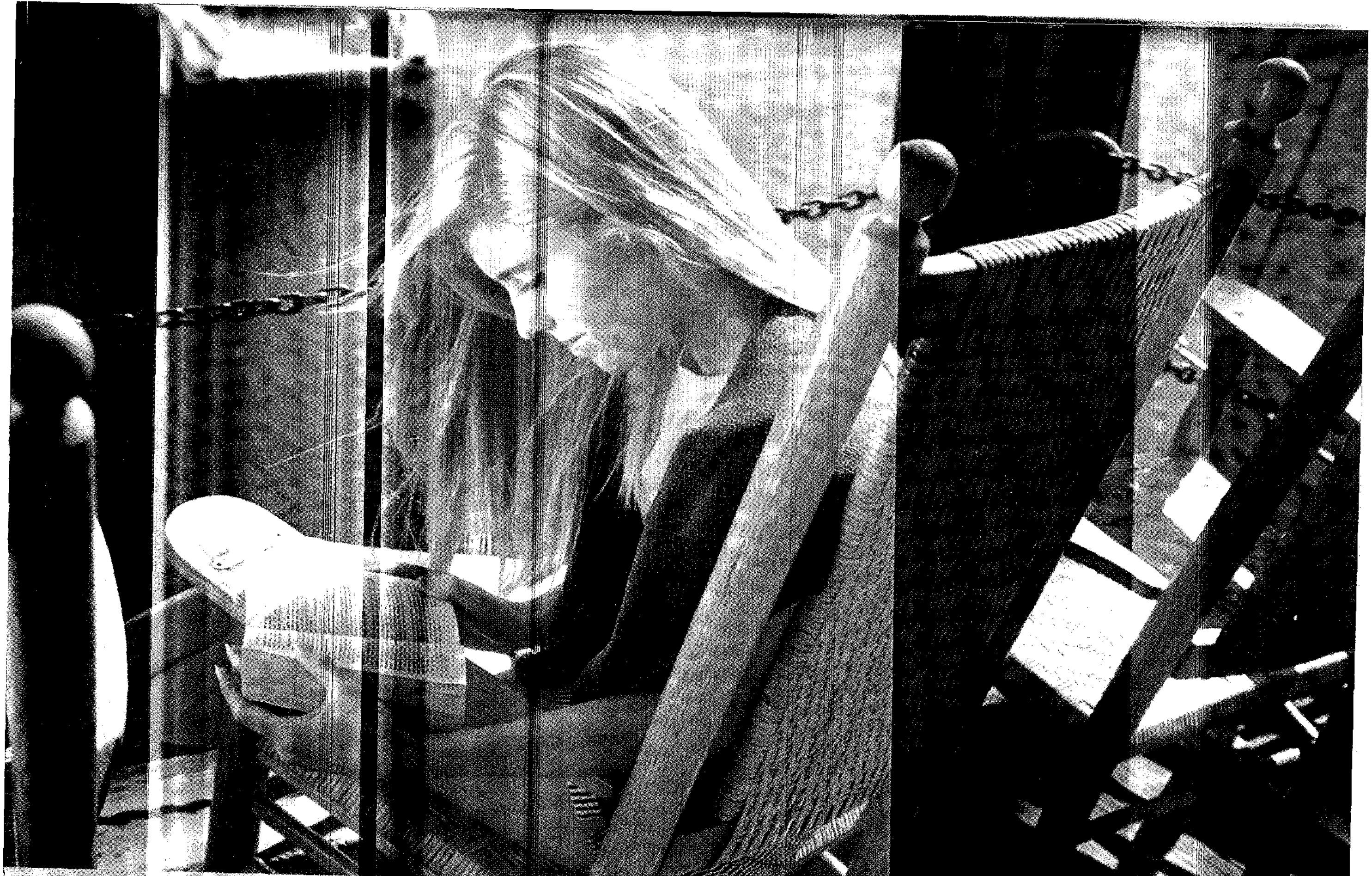

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puter and prepared to fly by direct law.

It was 8:24. He laughed for the first time since childhood: he was in the Atlantic of the sky, at the controls of the biggest weapon in history.

At 8:27 he made a grand counterclockwise semicircle, turning south.

At 8:44 he began his descent.

The core reason was of course all the killing—all the putting to death. Not the crew, not the passengers, not the office workers in the Twin Towers, not the cleaners and the caterers, not the men of the N.Y.P.D. and the F.D.N.Y. He was thinking of the war, the wars, the war cycles that would flow from this day. He didn't believe in the Devil, as an active force, but he did believe in death. Death, at certain times, stopped moving at its even pace and broke into a hungry, lumbering run. Here was the primordial secret. No longer closely guarded—no longer well kept. Killing was divine delight. And your suicide was just a part of the contribution you made—the massive contribution to death. All your frigidities and futilities were rewritten, becoming swollen with meaning. This was what was possible when you turned the tides of life around, when you ran with beasts, when you flew with the flies.

First, the lesser totems of Queens, like a line of defense for the tutelary godlings of the island.

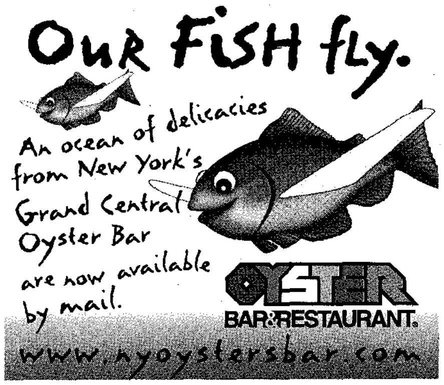
When he came clattering in over the struts and slats of Manhattan, there it was ahead of him and below him—the thing which is called World. Cross streets, blocks, districts, shot out from beneath the speed lines of the plane. He was glad that he wouldn't have to plow down into the city, and he even felt love for it, for all its strivings and couplings and sunderings. And he felt no impulse to increase power or to bank or to strike even lower. It was reeling him in. Now even the need to shit felt right and good as his destination surged toward him.

There are many accounts, uniformly incomplete, of what it is like to die slowly. But there is no information at all about what it is like to die suddenly and violently. We are being gentle when we describe such deaths as instant. "The passengers died instantly." Did they? It may be that some people can do it, can die instantly. The very old, because the vital powers are weak; the very young, because there is no great accretion of experience needing to be scattered. Muhammad Atta was thirty-three. As for him (and perhaps this is true even in cases of vaporization, perhaps this was true even for the wall-shadows of Japan), it took much longer than an instant. By the time the last second arrived, the first second seemed as far away as childhood.

American 11 struck at 8:46:40. Muhammad Atta's body was beyond all healing by 8:46:41, but his mind, his presence, needed time to shut itself down. The physical torment—a panic attack in every nerve, a riot of the atoms—merely italicized the last shinings of his brain. They weren't thoughts; they were more like a series of unignorable conclusions, imposed from without. Here was the hereafter, after all; and here was the reckoning. His mind groaned and fumbled with an irreconcilability, a defeat, a self-cancellation. Could he assemble the argument? It follows—by definition—if and only if. And then the argument assembled, all by itself. . . . The joy of killing was proportional to the value of what was destroyed. But that value was something a killer could never see and never gauge. And where was the joy he thought he had felt—where was that joy, that itch, that paltry tingle? Yes, how gravely he had underestimated it. How very gravely he had underestimated life. His own he had hated, and had wished away; but see how long it was taking to absent itself—and with what helpless grief was he watching it go, imperturbable in its beauty and its power. Even as his flesh fried and his blood boiled, there was life, kissing its fingertips. Then it echoed out, and ended.

## II

On September 11, 2001, he opened his eyes at 4 A.M., in Portland, Maine; and Muhammad Atta's last day began. ♦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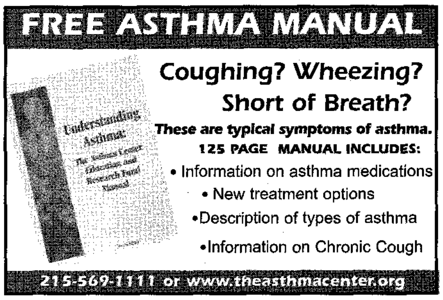
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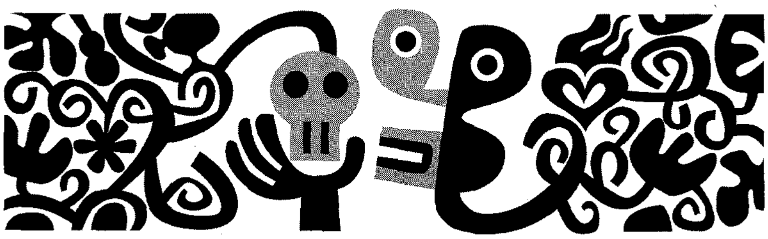

### A CRITIC AT LARGE

# PLYMOUTH ROCKED

*Of Pilgrims, Puritans, and professors.*

BY JILL LEPORE

Samuel Eliot Morison, the last Harvard historian to ride a horse to work, liked to canter to Cambridge on his gray gelding, tie it to a tree in the Yard, stuff his saddlebags with papers to grade, and trot back home to his four-story brick house at the foot of Beacon Hill. "Ours was the horsey end of town," he wrote of the place where he was born, in 1887, and died, in 1976. Morison has been called the greatest American historian of the twentieth century. With that, as these things go, not everyone agrees. He spent nearly all his career at Harvard; he entered as a freshman in 1904, and retired, an endowed professor, in 1955. Summers he spent sailing: he loved nothing so much as the ocean. "My feeling for the sea," Morison said, "is such that writing about it is about as embarrassing as making a confession of religious faith."

Morison wrote more than fifty books and won two Pulitzer Prizes, but he is probably best remembered for his biography of Christopher Columbus, whose voyages he retraced, in 1939 and 1940, by yacht. When the resulting book was published, in 1942, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was so impressed that he agreed to allow Morison to join the Navy as what we might now call an "embedded historian": for the remainder of the Second World War, Lieutenant Commander Morison fought the battles about which he later spent twenty years writing; the result, in fifteen dense, salt-sprayed volumes, was "The History of United States Naval Operations in World War II." He left the Navy in 1951, a rear admiral.

Besides the sea, Morison wrote about two things especially well: Colonial New England and historical writing. In a 1931 essay called "Those Misunderstood Puritans," he fought hard against the notion that "the fathers of New England" were "somber kill-joys." Morison blamed this myth on the Victorians, who cast the Puritans as prudes in order that they might feel, by comparison, broad-minded. As Morison pointed out, with characteristic clarity, relying on the nineteenth century to understand the seventeenth is a rather grave chronological error. "The right approach to the Puritan founders of New England is historical, by way of the Middle Ages," he explained. "They were, broadly speaking, the Englishmen who had accepted the Reformation without the Renaissance."

Reading Morison, you can almost hear yourself agree with him, even when you don't. That was Morison's gift. Except that it wasn't a gift. Morison cared about writing, evangelically, but he had to work hard at it, and he railed against members of his profession who were unwilling to exert the same effort. In a twenty-five-cent pamphlet, "History as a Literary Art: An Appeal to Young Historians," printed in 1946, Morison complained, "American historians, in their eagerness to present facts and their laudable concern to tell the truth, have neglected the literary aspects of their craft. They have forgotten that there is an art of writing history."

They had forgotten, that is, an American literary tradition begun by "the earliest colonial historians" and, above all, by William Bradford, the governor and first chronicler of the Plymouth plantation. In 1620, Bradford crossed what he called "the vast and furious ocean" on board the Mayflower, a hundred-and-eighty-ton, three-masted, square-rigged merchant vessel, its cramped berths filled with forty other religious dissenters who wanted to separate from the Church of England, and some sixty rather less pious passengers who were in search of nothing so much as adventure. Bradford called these "profane" passengers "Strangers," but to modern sensibilities they can feel more familiar than, say, William Brewster, who brought along a son named Wrestling, short for "wrestling with God."

The colony that William Bradford helped plant on the windswept western shore of Cape Cod Bay was tiny, and it shrank before it grew; by 1650, its population had not yet reached a thousand. Plymouth Colony was Bradford's colony. Between 1621 and 1656, he was elected governor every year but five. Passionate, self-taught, and bold beyond measure, Bradford was the one who called his people Pilgrims. He was also a poet, though not a very good one:

> From my years young in days of youth,
> God did make known to me his truth,
> And call'd me from my native place
> For to enjoy the means of grace.
> In wilderness he did me guide,
> and in strange lands for me provide.
> In fears and wants, through weal and woe,
> A Pilgrim passed I to and fro.

He wrote his history, he said, "in a plain style, with singular regard unto the simple truth in all things." He might have been describing how he lived his life. But he was more than plain and simple: he was contemplative. Cotton Mather wrote of him, "He was a person for study as well as action," something that might equally be said of Samuel Eliot Morison, who once, interrupted at his desk by the incessant barking of a neighbor's dog, went outside and shot it.

Bradford began writing his history in 1630, the year the Englishman John Winthrop founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Winthrop's colonists are more commonly called Puritans, because they wanted to purify the Anglican Church, but the Pilgrims were Puritans,

RICHARD McGUIRE

*Generations of historians have drawn on the chronicles of the first great colonial historian, Plymouth's Governor William Bradford.*

too—and "nobody more so," as Morison once put it. The distinction between Pilgrims and Puritans is a nineteenth-century invention; in truth, their doctrinal differences were slight. Still, the rivalry between the two colonies was intense, and to Plymouth's disadvantage. By 1641, more than twenty thousand colonists had settled in Massachusetts, entirely dwarfing the "Old Colony." (In 1691, Plymouth became part of Massachusetts.)

Governor Bradford, in other words, had more than barking dogs to distract him: not just Winthrop's colonists, to the north, but Indians everywhere, pigs run amok, and Quakers in Rhode Island taunting ministers in the pulpit. Try as he might, Bradford just couldn't find the time to catch his past up with his present. He died in 1657, at the age of sixty-seven, his history unfinished. Maybe because Bradford's history ends abruptly, in 1647, most Americans' sense of what happened to the Pilgrims vaguely trails off, too, sometime after Massasoit, a Wampanoag Indian, taught them to plant corn and joined them for the first Thanksgiving, but long before Plymouth and those same Indians went to war. In 1675, Massasoit's son Metacom, called King Philip by the English, launched a war against Plymouth and, eventually, against Massachusetts and Rhode Island and Connecticut, too. The bloody carnage known as King Philip's War nearly put an end to the Puritan experiment.

Nathaniel Philbrick, in his new book, "Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War" (Viking; $29.95), calls William Bradford's history "the greatest book written in seventeenth-century America." (With that, as these things go, not everyone agrees, but in this case most do.) Despite its title, Philbrick's book isn't really about the Mayflower. Roughly half of it covers Plymouth's history up until about the time of Bradford's death; the other half tells the story of King Philip's War.

Of the Pilgrims' perilous voyage in 1620, Philbrick writes beautifully: "For sixty-five days, the *Mayflower* had blundered her way through storms and headwinds, her bottom a shaggy pelt of seaweed and barnacles, her leaky decks spewing salt water onto her passengers' devoted heads." But the voyage is nearly over by the end of Chapter 1, if not soon enough for Bradford's distressed wife, Dorothy, who had left her three-year-old son behind in Holland and who, in sight of land, fell—or more likely threw herself—over the gunwales, and drowned. And, unfortunately, by the time the Pilgrims go ashore, readers have learned more about things like the Mayflower's sounding leads ("the deep-sea or 'dipsy' lead, which weighed between forty and one hundred pounds and was equipped with 600 feet of line, and the smaller 'hand-lead,' just seven to fourteen pounds with 120 feet of line") than about its passengers' religious convictions ("A Puritan believed that everything happened for a reason"). It's not that the ship doesn't matter. But with every sway and pitch of its decks readers are lulled into believing that the people on board, swaying and pitching in winds we can feel, clutching at ropes we can touch, were just like us. They were not.

Philbrick, a former all-American sailor and Sunfish-racing champion who lives on Nantucket, seems, at first glance, to be following in Morison's wake. Waves slosh through all of his books, whose titles sound like the names of sea chanties: "Sea of Glory," "Away Off Shore," "Second Wind," and "In the Heart of the Sea," the winner of the 2000 National Book Award for nonfiction. Like Morison, he finds most history books written by professors a chore to read. Trained as a journalist, Philbrick once explained his decision to include a bibliographic essay instead of footnotes or references to works of scholarship in his text: "I wanted to remove the scholarly apparatus that so often gets in the way of the plot in academic history."

Sam Morison never met a footnote he didn't like, but his relationship to academic history was a complicated one. At Harvard, he was neither a natural teacher nor a beloved one. He never held office hours, he made his students come to class in coat and tie, and he refused to teach Radcliffe girls (he considered them frivolous). He liked to lecture in riding breeches and, in later years, in his Navy uniform. "Even before he became an admiral, you felt as though he were one and you were a midshipman," a former student, the eminent Yale historian Edmund Morgan, recalled.

But Morison believed, ardently, that there was something about university life that mattered, that made people more

The Vesparados

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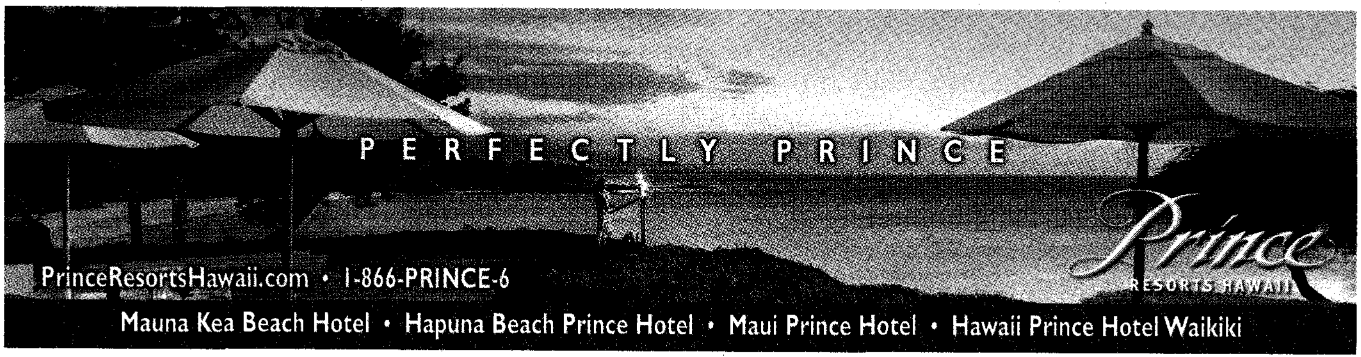
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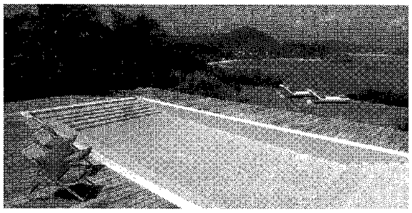

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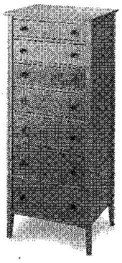

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honest, more accountable, and less likely to get things wrong. In a 1948 review in the *Atlantic Monthly* of a book by the historian Charles Beard, who had left Columbia thirty years earlier to live on a dairy farm, Morison suggested (pretty cruelly, since Beard was on his deathbed at the time) that Beard's work had suffered from his isolation: "You get more back talk even from freshmen than from milch cows."

Maybe if Nathaniel Philbrick had had to answer to freshmen he might have learned to be a bit more skeptical of his sources. The first half of his book stars William Bradford, and relies, appropriately, on Bradford's history, or, rather, on Samuel Eliot Morison's invaluable edition of Bradford's history. So much did Morison admire Bradford, so much did he despise the myth of the Puritans, so much did he want Americans to read better history, that he spent five years meticulously preparing an edition of Bradford's history "that the ordinary reader might peruse with pleasure as well as profit." Working closely with his faithful secretary, Antha Card, to whom he read Bradford's every word aloud, Morison altered the original's antiquated spelling and cleared the text of notes and scribbles made by everyone from Bradford's biographers to his descendants, material that had been injudiciously included, and mistakenly attributed to Bradford himself, in earlier printed editions. Morison applied his magnifying glass to every trace of ink on the manuscript's pages. Where earlier copyists had Bradford concluding that "the light here kindled hath shone to many," Morison pointed out that the light actually shone "unto" many; a splotch that looked as though Bradford had crossed out the "un" turned out, on closer inspection, to be "merely an inadvertent blot from the Governor's quill pen." Published in 1952 as "Of Plymouth Plantation," Morison's definitive edition of Bradford is now in its twenty-third printing.

Not long after Bradford's death, Massasoit died, too, and with them ended an era of uneasy peace. Inheriting his father's position in 1662, Philip tried to halt English encroachment. When that failed, he began preparing for war. In January of 1675, a Christian Indian named John Sassamon warned Plymouth's governor, Josiah Winslow, of Philip's plans. Sassamon was soon found dead. In June, Plymouth executed three of Philip's men for Sassamon's murder. Within days, Wampanoags had begun attacking English towns.

In proportion to population, King Philip's War was one of the deadliest wars in American history. More than half of all English settlements in New England were either destroyed or abandoned. Hundreds of colonists were killed. Thousands of Indians died; those who survived, including Philip's nine-year-old son, Massasoit's grandson, were loaded on ships and sold into slavery. Because the conflict was, for both sides, a holy war, it was waged with staggering brutality. New England's Indians fought to take their land back from the Christians, mocking their praying victims: "Where is Your O God?" One, having killed a colonist, stuffed a Bible into his victim's gutted belly. Puritans interpreted such acts as a sign of God's wrath, as punishment for their descent into sinfulness. Not only had they become, over the years, less pious than the first generation of settlers; they had also failed to convert the Indians to Christianity. The Boston minister Increase Mather asked, "Why should we suppose that God is not offended with us, when his displeasure is written, in such visible and bloody Characters?"

Reading those scarlet letters, Puritans concluded that God was commanding them to defeat their "heathen" enemies by any means necessary. For the English, all restraint in war, all notions of "just conduct," applied only to secular warfare; in a holy war, anything goes. Ministers urged their congregations to "take, kill, burn, sink, destroy all sin and Corruption, &C which are professed enemies to Christ Jesus, and not to pity or spare any of them." Such a policy, then as now, breeds nothing if not merciless retaliation. As a Boston merchant reported to London, the Indians, in town after town, tortured and mutilated their victims, "either cutting off the Head, ripping open the Belly, or skulping the Head of Skin and Hair, and hanging them up as Trophies;

wearing Men's Fingers as Bracelets about their Necks, and Stripes of their Skins which they dresse for Belts."

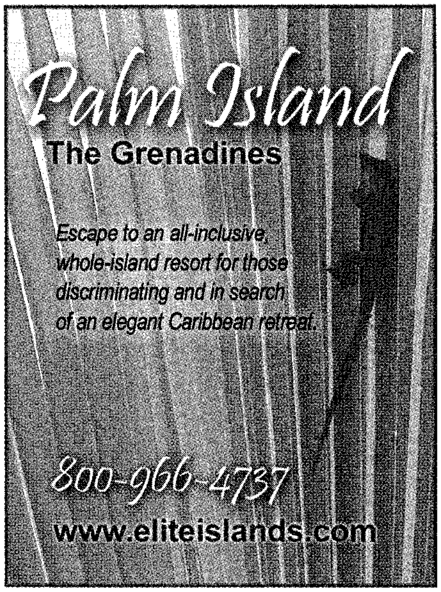
In his recounting of the war, Philbrick places at center stage a militia captain named Benjamin Church. Born in Plymouth in 1639, Church fought in many of the war's bloodiest engagements. Among them was the "Great Swamp Fight," in December, 1675, in which English forces killed thousands of Narragansett women, children, and old men hiding in a makeshift fort constructed for their protection in the middle of a Rhode Island swamp. Most died after the English set the fort on fire. (One Boston poet wrote, "Here might be heard an hideous Indian cry,/Of wounded ones who in the wigwams fry.") In August, 1676, after Philip was shot, it was Church who ordered his body drawn, quartered, and decapitated, whereupon the colony declared a special day to give thanks to God for their signal victory. Philip's head was placed on top of a stake in the middle of town, where it remained, rotting, for decades.

Philbrick explains the choice of William Bradford and Benjamin Church as his two main characters this way: "Bradford and Church could not have been more different—one was pious and stalwart, the other was audacious and proud—but both wrote revealingly about their lives in the New World. Together, they tell a fifty-six-year intergenerational saga of discovery, accommodation, community, and war." Here, Philbrick's "Mayflower" runs aground.

The problem is that Benjamin Church did not write revealingly about his life in the New World. Arguably, he didn't write about it at all. In 1716, a Boston printer published a book called "Entertaining Passages relating to Philip's War . . . with some account of the Divine Providence towards Benjamin Church." The title page lists its author as Church's forty-two-year-old son, Thomas, who was barely a toddler at the time of the war. In the text, too, Thomas is named as the author, although a brief preface allows that Thomas, in drafting the manuscript, consulted his father's notes and that the elder Church "had the perusal of" his son's manuscript and found "nothing amiss." And why would he? "Entertaining Passages" paints Church not only as the hero of every battle he fought but as the Puritans' voice of reason and restraint, as the man of conscience who attempts, in vain, to halt every atrocity: when his Mohegan allies want to torment a captured Nipmuck with fire and knives, Church "interceded and prevailed for his escaping torture"; in the Great Swamp Fight, Church, badly injured, valiantly hobbles to his commanding officer and begs him to stop the attack, only to be rebuffed.

This as-told-to, after-the-fact memoir is the single most unreliable account of one of the most well-documented wars of the Colonial period. More than four hundred letters written by eyewitnesses in 1675 and 1676 survive in New England archives, along with more than twenty printed accounts, written as the war was happening, or very shortly thereafter. But even though "Entertaining Passages" was compiled forty years after King Philip's War had ended and may well have been entirely written by Church's son (who, at the very least, edited his father's "notes" considerably), Philbrick uses it without reservation or caution. Like footnotes, these facts apparently got in the way of Philbrick's plot. On the second-to-last page of his book, he reluctantly concedes that Church is a "persona," even as he insists that "Church according to Church is too brave, too cunning, and too good to be true is beside the point." This is about as reasonable, and as indefensible, as writing a history of the Vietnam War that relies extensively and uncritically on an "autobiography" of John Kerry written in 2013 by Kerry's daughter Vanessa. As Samuel Eliot Morison liked to say about such things, "Very suspicious!"

If Morison cared about professional standards, he nonetheless held himself well above the academic fray. He was uninterested in historical debates, and hated academic fashions: "Somewhere along the assembly-line of their education, students have had inserted in them a bolt called 'points of view,' secured with a nut called 'trends,' and they imagine that the historian's problem is simply to compare points of view and describe trends. It is not." Although he was elected president of the American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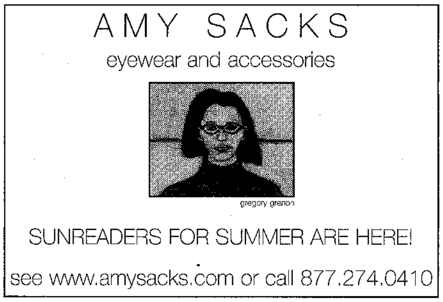
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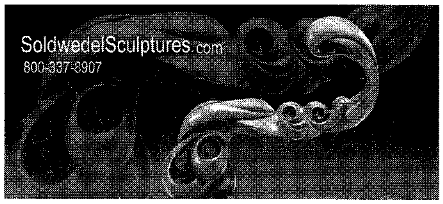
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Historical Association, and duly served, Morison almost never attended its meetings. When he did show up, he walked through a crowded hotel mezzanine, dazed academics parting before him like the Red Sea. Reaching the end of the room, he turned around, and walked back, and then back and forth again. A friend came up to him and asked, "Sam, what are you doing?" "Doing?" Morison replied. "*Doing!* Why, what do you think I'm doing? *Mixing!*"

Morison also complained—and the same complaint can be made today—about what he called a "chain reaction of dullness": professors who write "dull, solid, valuable monographs" train graduate students to write dull, solid, valuable monographs and, before you know it, the only history Americans are reading is written by journalists. Morison didn't resent this—to the contrary, he urged his students to learn from the best journalists, and the best novelists, too—but it worried him. At one time, he found himself in sympathy with Orwellian calls by members of the American Historical Association to have historians licensed, like doctors, and subject to grand-jury prosecution for "misstatements of the truth."

History isn't brain surgery. Even when it's done poorly, it's not fatal. Still, it can knock you down. Philbrick rests his argument, or, rather, the arc of his plot, on his reading of Benjamin Church. "The great mystery of this story," Philbrick writes, "is how America emerged from the terrible darkness of King Philip's War to become the United States." The answer? Church. "Out of the annealing flame of one of the most horrendous wars ever fought in North America," Philbrick writes, "he forged an identity that was part Pilgrim, part mariner, part Indian, and altogether his own." Church, for Philbrick, is the ur-American, the ancestor of everyone "from Daniel Boone to Davy Crockett to Natty Bumppo to Rambo." He goes further: by believing that "success in war was about coercion rather than slaughter," Philbrick argues, Church "anticipated the welcoming, transformative beast that eventually became—once the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were in place—the United States."

Is this the same Benjamin Church who, the year before he fell off his horse and died, a battle-weary "old soldier," had his son put together a history recalling his glory days as a reluctant and principled Indian fighter by way of both enhancing his reputation and reconciling himself to a war that many Puritan New Englanders, like him, had since come to feel bad about? In him we see the birth of a nation? The regret, in "Entertaining Passages," breaks your heart. It was meant to. But it is evidence of remorse, not of restraint (and, even if it were, what restraint has to do with declaring American independence is bewilderingly unclear). In one chapter, Thomas Church tells the story of his father finding an old Indian man in the woods, after the war's end:

> The Captain asked his name, he replied, Conscience. Conscience, said the Captain, smiling, then the war is over; for that was what they were searching for, it being much wanted.

This, of course, is an allegory, not an experience. It is Church, father and son, abdicating the slaughter, four decades after it was all over. It reveals a great deal about how New Englanders remembered the war, but it's about the shoddiest evidence you can think of for telling the story of how they waged it, and a hopelessly leaky boat in which to try to sail to 1776.

Those poor, misunderstood Puritans. Time still moves forward, not backward, and relying on the eighteenth century to understand the seventeenth is still a grave chronological error. "The place of the Pilgrim Fathers in American history can best be stated by a paradox," Morison wrote. "Of slight importance in their own time, they are of great and increasing significance in our time." To them we look, in vain, to see ourselves.

Readers today would find the way that Morison writes about King Philip's War, and especially about Indians, distressing at best. In his 1956 book, "The Story of the Old Colony," Morison boasted, "Whenever there was trouble with the Indians, Plymouth men were up in front, shooting!" But even if he never fathomed New England's Algonquians, and never really tried to, Morison made close study of people like William Bradford, placing him, as best he could, in his proper time and place. In preparing "Of Plymouth Plantation," Morison crafted an edition that would be, as he put it, "modern (*not* modernized)." It would not do, Morison knew, to try to update William Bradford. Better to understand him "by way of the Middle Ages." Morison wrote with grace and eloquence of the vast gulf separating seventeenth-century New Englanders from himself. "The ways of the puritans are not my ways, and their faith is not my faith," he confessed. "Nevertheless they appear to me a courageous, humane, brave, and significant people."

For all his ambivalence about academic history, Morison was first and foremost a scholar. (During one of the nation's many bouts of anti-intellectual insanity, Morison, of all people, was targeted; in the early fifties, just after he retired from the Navy, he was labelled a "Harvard Red-ucator" and listed among Harvard's Communist-sympathizing "Egotistical, Arrogant Eggheads.") Yet, just after Morison's death, a colleague, Bernard Bailyn, observed, "There is no 'Morison school.' " Because he wrote more for the public than for his fellow-historians, Morison has few academic disciples today, and, if the chain reaction of dullness continues unbroken, Morison is as much to blame as anybody. But it could be argued that there has been a sea change: there now *is* a School of Morison, a school of history writers who are not professors, not all of whom care as much as Morison did about context and argument and, above all, evidence.

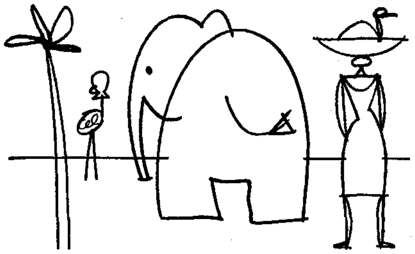
In 1716, Benjamin Church, or at least his son Thomas, looked back at King Philip's War and decided that it was possible to be both victorious and virtuous in the kind of war the colonists had fought against the Indians—a people at a vast technological disadvantage, fighting a holy war, with almost nothing left to lose. But it wasn't possible. At least, nothing in the evidence from 1675 and 1676 suggests that it was. And pretending that Benjamin Church found "Conscience" in the woods of Plymouth in that winter of war, rather than understanding why, forty years later, he came to wish he had, doesn't make it any more possible today. The ways of the Puritans are not our ways, their faith is not our faith. And their wars are not our wars. ♦

# BRIEFLY NOTED

*Travel Down the Ages*

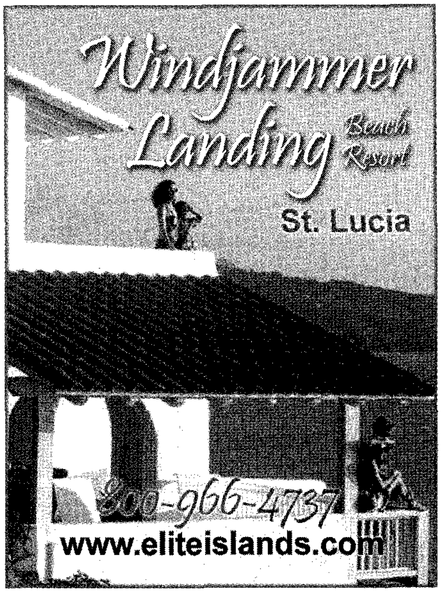
Through the Pillars of Herakles, *by Duane W. Roller (Routledge; $100).* There is no word in classical Greek or Latin that exactly matches our sense of "exploring," Roller says, but he thinks that ancient exploration beyond the Mediterranean has been underestimated. By the end of the fourth century B.C., the Greeks had sailed as far south as Zanzibar and as far north as Iceland (Roller's persuasive identification of the land of Thule, discovered by Pytheas). Much of Roller's work involves piecing together the evidence of coastline descriptions known as *periplooi.* He is wryly aware of the unreliability of many claims, some of which made even the writers of later antiquity incredulous. The explorer Mago said that he had circumnavigated Africa, but, Roller notes, "if this is the same person who claimed to have crossed the Sahara three times without drinking water, his veracity can hardly be presumed."

Pilgrimages, *by John Ure (Carroll & Graf; $15.95).* Ure argues that although the medieval Church did not consider wanderlust an acceptable motive for pilgrimage, the journeys made by the faithful gave rise to a booming tourist industry. Travellers bought saintly figurines as souvenirs and guidebooks warning them of treacherous routes, fetid streams, and inefficacious relics. (Competitive shrine-keepers often maligned the authenticity of rival sites.) Ure's book spans thirteen centuries—from the birth of the trend, after Constantine's conversion to Christianity, in 312, to John Bunyan's allegorical "The Pilgrim's Progress," in the seventeenth century, by which time pilgrimage had become, in the words of Sir Walter Raleigh, "an interior journey." The author, a retired British diplomat, favors an anecdotal—indeed, sometimes garrulous—approach, and appends an epilogue of his own pilgrimages.



Trickster Travels, *by Natalie Zemon Davis (Hill & Wang; $30).* In 1518, al-Hasan al-Wazzan, a diplomat of the Sultan of Fez, was kidnapped in the Mediterranean by pirates, who brought him to Pope Leo X. Al-Wazzan had travelled extensively in Africa, and was able to provide firsthand intelligence on the geography and politics of the infidel region. Leo Africanus, as he became known, remained in Rome for the next nine years, converted from Islam to Christianity (he was baptized by the Pope himself), and compiled his "Description of Africa," a collection of learning, hearsay, and personal anecdote that shaped European ideas about Africa for centuries. Few facts exist to illuminate Leo's actual life in Rome, but Davis fills us in on the scholars with whom he may have conversed and the social mores to which he would have had to adjust, arriving at a portrait of "a man with a double vision," straddling two warring cultures.

Eat, Pray, Love, *by Elizabeth Gilbert (Viking; $24.95).* At the age of thirty-one, Gilbert moved with her husband to the suburbs of New York and began trying to get pregnant, only to realize that she wanted neither a child nor a husband. Three years later, after a protracted divorce, she embarked on a yearlong trip of recovery, with three main stops: Rome, for pleasure (mostly gustatory, with a special emphasis on gelato); an ashram outside of Mumbai, for spiritual searching; and Bali, for "balancing." These destinations are all on the beaten track, but Gilbert's exuberance and her self-deprecating humor enliven the proceedings: recalling the first time she attempted to speak directly to God, she says, "It was all I could do to stop myself from saying, 'I've always been a big fan of your work.' "



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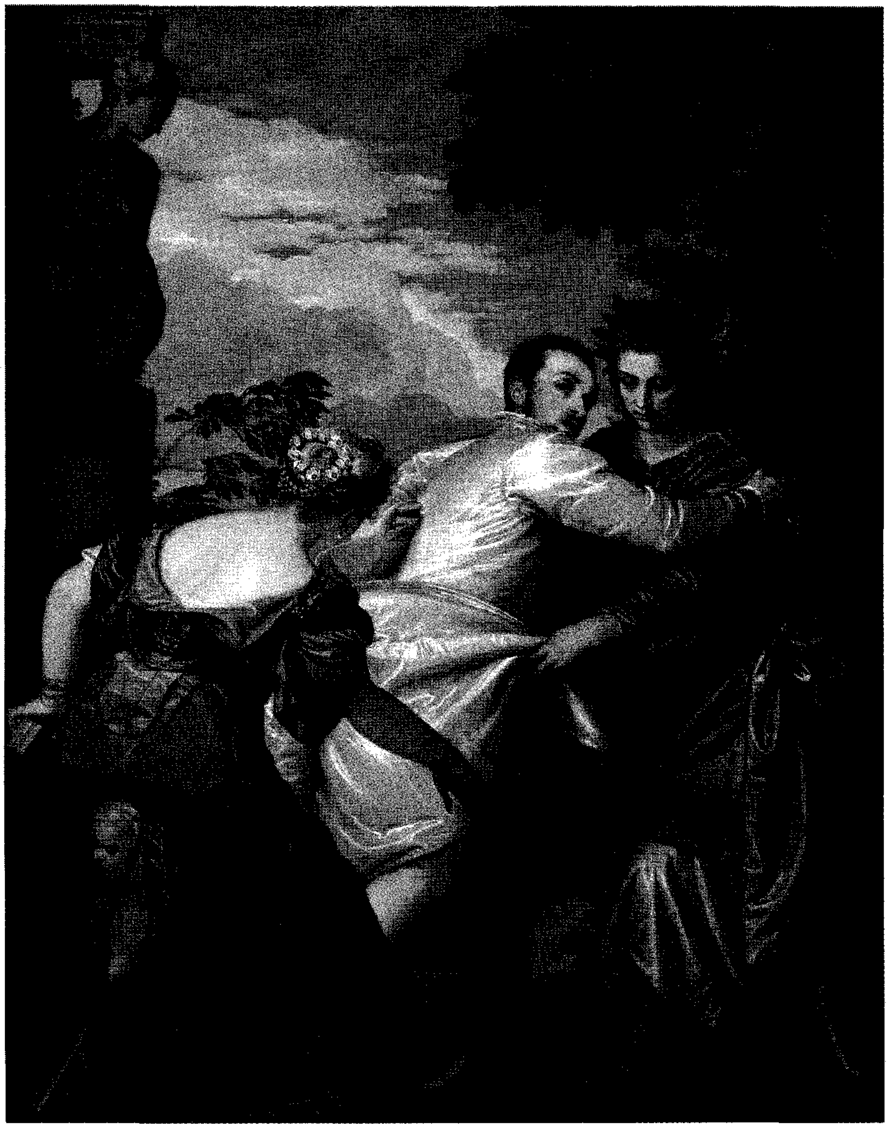
THE ART WORLD

# LIFE IN VENICE

*The colorful Paolo Veronese.*

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



*Veronese's "The Choice Between Virtue and Vice," circa 1565.*

COURTESY FRICK COLLECTION

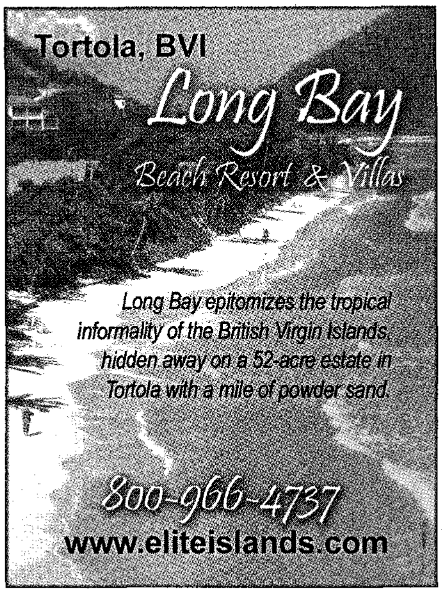
There is a sacred text for those of us (a happy few, but always recruiting) who are crazy about the paintings of Paolo Veronese, five of which have been brought together in the Oval Room of the Frick Collection to form a tiny, luscious show, rather dauntingly titled "Veronese's Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice." The text is a passage from John Ruskin's autobiography, "Praeterita," that relates the great critic's life-changing experience on a Sunday in Turin in 1858. A duteous observer of the Sabbath, he had attended a service of an old, proto-Protestant sect, the Waldensians, where the preacher, "a somewhat stunted figure in a plain black coat," sermonized "on the wickedness of the wide world" and "on the exclusive favour with God" of his sparse congregation. "Myself neither cheered nor greatly alarmed by this doctrine," Ruskin wrote, he left the chapel and went to the municipal gallery, where in one room a Veronese, "Solomon and the Queen of Sheba"—the queen and her retinue arrive bearing gifts, the most delectable of which may be the queen herself—"glowed in full afternoon light." As he looked at the painting, he heard, through the open windows, "swells and falls" of a military band that "seemed to me more devotional, in their perfect art, tune, and discipline, than anything I remembered of evangelical hymns. And as the perfect colour and sound gradually asserted their power on me, they seemed finally to fasten me in the old article of Jewish faith, that things done delightfully and rightly were always done by the help and in the Spirit of God." On "that day, my evangelical beliefs were put away, to be debated of no more." In a letter to a friend, Ruskin concluded from the event that "to be a first-rate painter, you *mustn't* be pious—but rather a little wicked and entirely a man of the world." He thus gave himself over to a principled aestheticism that through his influence (on his student Oscar Wilde, for one) would inform the substitute religions of modern art.

Why was the Mannerist Veronese the agent of Ruskin's "unconversion," and not an earlier, superior Venetian, such as Bellini or Giorgione, or really any paragon of painting—Rembrandt or Velázquez? You might as well ask why the operative music was something crisp and demotic rather than something by Mozart. The answer is that Ruskin's mind would have been too actively engaged to incubate an epiphany. The work of no other major painter, perhaps until Matisse, is more intelligent, in and as painting, while making less appeal to intelligence, in and as anything else. Nor is Veronese expressive in the bravura way of his contemporary Tintoretto. Like band music, his art is at once strict and stirring—rigorous in service to having fun. The key is color, which Veronese exalts as an end in itself—serenely, without the rhetorical sizzle of Titian or the swooniness of Raphael. Hardly anyone appreciates Veronese right away. It's not a matter of acquired taste, exactly, but of taste awakened to the rarity of a sensation both simple and unfathomably subtle. You must stop thinking and agree to just believe your eyes. Ruskin got it only when the painter George Richmond shocked him by contrasting a "true" Veronese with a "violently conventional" Rubens. Ruskin wrote, "'In what way true?' I asked, still not understanding. 'Well,' said Richmond, 'compare the pure shadows on the flesh, in Veronese, and its clear edge, with Rubens's ochre and vermillion, and outline of asphalt.' . . . From that moment, I saw what was meant by Venetian color." Veronese's shadings are variants of the hues they inflect, and his contours aren't so much boundaries of form as sinuous frontiers where paint changes color. Look especially at his renderings of fabric, like visual concerts of a sonorous, mindful brush. Clothes, in Veronese, are sexier than nudity.

Grandly installed in one of the loveliest museum galleries in the world, the show's five paintings are all the Veronese allegories to be found in American collections: the Frick's own "The Choice Between Virtue and Vice" and "Wisdom and Strength"; "Venus and Mars United by Love," from the Metropolitan; and, from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Allegory of Navigation with an Astrolabe" and "Allegory of Navigation with a Cross-Staff." A catalogue by the Frick's Xavier F. Salomon sorts out the works' murky provenances—tentatively dating four of them to circa 1565, when the painter favored brilliant coloration, and the relatively muted "Venus and Mars" to the fifteen-seventies—and relates their allegorical programs. The latter task is onerous, like explaining jokes; but it arrives at hints of how slyly Veronese played on standard themes. "The Choice" dramatizes a gentleman's escape from sensual Vice (who has bloodily clawed one of his legs—some choice!) into the arms of august, belaurelled Virtue. "Wisdom" is a woman in heavenly light flanked by a skulking Hercules, with earthly riches at her feet; it is inscribed "Omnia Vanitas." In the sheerly erotic "Venus and Mars," a winged Cupid ties together, with a pink ribbon, the legs of the naked lactating goddess and the clothed he-man god. In the tall Los Angeles paintings, which are probably from a decorative suite celebrating Venice's nautical prowess, heroic male figures clutch the eponymous instruments. These last two are minor works, but wonderful in their way—recalling a remark by Eugène Delacroix that, unlike Titian, Veronese has no "pretensions to making a masterpiece of each picture. . . . That apparent carelessness as to details which gives so much simplicity, is due to the habit of *decorating*."

Paolo Veronese was born in Verona in 1528; the surname of his father, a stonecutter, is unknown. He came by his splendid nonchalance early on, as a specialist in decorative frescoes (most now lost), including one in a villa by Palladio. In 1555, he settled in Venice and adopted the name Paolo Caliari. Staggeringly prolific, he worked fast, filling in drawn designs with a compendious palette of ultramarine and pale blues, silvery whites, pinks and oranges, lemon yellows, and greens, including the bright and tender shade, cherished by Impressionists, which is named for him. (A few pigments have, sadly, decayed: a broad passage of orpiment yellow and realgar red-orange in the "Astrolabe" picture is a chalky ruin.) Then he overlaid simmering shadows and lambent highlights. His way with figures is rounded and sculptural. Indeed, the somewhat awkward-looking Hercules and Mars in this show faithfully quote particular ancient sculptures, with a droll montage effect rather like that of the appropriated figures in Manet's "Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe." (His way with actual people, in portraits, betrays a weak suit; the last thing that interested Veronese was psychology.) Conjoined with seductive color, the physicality of his style draws you into the rumpus of the pictures, to jounce around in imagined, amiable horseplay.

Veronese's wit is documented in the only surviving anecdote about him. Haled before the Inquisition in 1573 for populating a vast painting of the Last Supper with "buffoons, drunkards, Germans, dwarfs, and similar vulgarities," in the words of an infuriated judge, he hazarded a range of apologies. At one point he said, "I fill up the space, and that's why the odd figure too many has slipped in." At another, he laid claim, for painters, to "the same license the poets and jesters take." Ordered to correct the work at his own expense, he did so—by changing its title to "Feast in the House of Levi." (It's a blockbuster entertainment at the Accademia.) Plainly, in Venice, the value of art rivaled that of orthodoxy. I readily believe the account, in Tim Hilton's monumental biography of Ruskin, of how the critic made a nuisance of himself at a séance in spiritualism-mad London: "He did not want to hear from his grandmother; he wished to summon the spirit of Paolo Veronese." ♦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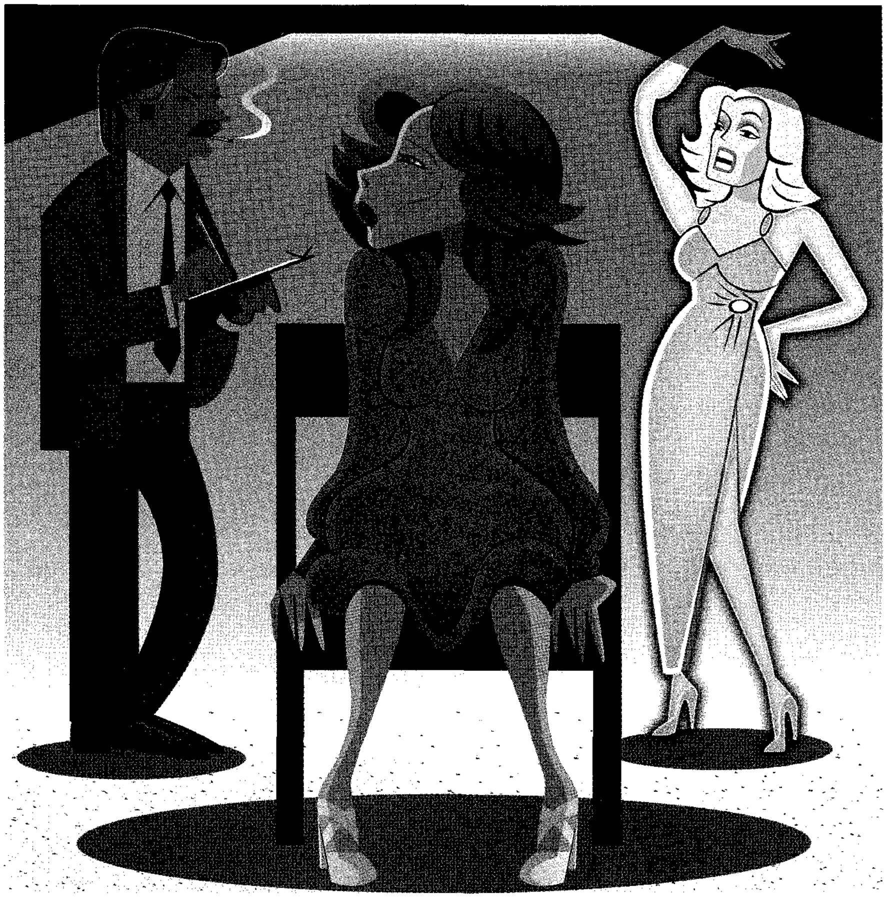
THE THEATRE

# STARDUST

*John Guare on ambition and delusion.*

BY HILTON ALS

The late film and stage artist Bob Fosse was the best director John Guare never had. In Fosse's last four movies—"Cabaret" (1972), "Lenny" (1974), "All That Jazz" (1979), and "Star 80" (1983)—we have what is perhaps America's most powerful and enduring indictment of show business and the hazards of the flesh. In these films, Fosse, a former dancer, spoke from the performer's perspective, a vantage point of torn ligaments and absurd hope. His various Pierrot-like protagonists are virtually untouched by the sour breath of reality until the true disasters of society overtake them and threaten to become the bigger drama, the grander spectacle. Fosse's Sally Bowles (Liza Minnelli), for instance, pays little mind to the blood being spilled across the cobblestones of Hitler's Berlin; it's more important to her that she make it to the Kit Kat Klub to sing "Cabaret" for her audience of the living dead. And you get the sense that, likewise, Fosse's Lenny Bruce (Dustin Hoffman) cares less about fighting for free speech in all those bland, fluorescent-lit courtrooms than he does about competing with his lawyers for center stage.



*Paul Sparks, Lili Taylor, and Sherie Rene Scott in "Landscape of the Body."*

ROBERT RISKO

In John Guare's most distinguished works, the main characters are similarly shut off from the world at large, while remaining fully engaged by the drama in their own heads. They are theatricalized creations—all cleavage and feathers, with a good dose of Puritan horror at the reckless and ruthless self-exposure that their hearts and minds lead them to. Guare's characters, however, unlike Fosse's, are often hemmed in by a sense of familial responsibility as well. From Guare's 1971 play, "The House of Blue Leaves":

> ARTIE: I give up six months of my life taking care of you and one morning I wake up and you're gone and all you got on is a nightgown and your bare feet—the corns of your bare feet for slippers. And it's snowing out, snowing a blizzard, and you're out in it. Twenty-four hours you're gone and the police are up here and long since gone and you're being broadcasted for in thirteen states all covered with snow—and I look out that window and I see a gray smudge in a nightgown standing on the edge of the roof over there—in a snowbank and I'm praying to God and I run out of this place, across the street. And I grab you down and you're so cold, your nightgown cuts into me like glass breaking. . . . You stay out twenty-four hours in a blizzard . . . and *I* get the pneumonia.

Artie Shaughnessy, a voluntary martyr, has carved his own cross to bear. Married to the loony, medicated, glamour-sucking Bananas, and in love with his controlling mistress, Bunny, he is a middle-aged zookeeper and would-be songwriter who sits at his upright piano in Queens with sad-eyed patience. His stigmata define him. He wouldn't know who he was without his accumulated burdens. (Guare's father also lived in Queens and dreamed of writing songs.) And it is precisely this kind of pathos—or, more specifically, the choice that must be made between the life of a working artist and the much safer role of a long-term sufferer—which makes Guare's characters resonate so strongly. In his plays, dreams of artistic success are snares, but so is living a life that could be considered "normal."

Art grows out of lies, of course, and Guare—he is a playwright down to his bones, one who writes well-cadenced, dense lines and speeches meant to showcase actors—has a master's command of how to dramatize lying. In his play "Six Degrees of Separation" (1990), a young black con man named Paul claims to be the son of a famous actor in order to gain entrée into a world of upper-class whites. For a while, he delights his hosts with more than his good looks: he tells the truth about the fiction-makers of the world. "My father, being an actor, has no real identity," he says. "He has no life—he has no memory—only the scripts producers send him in the mail through his agents." Guare suggests here, and in his astonishing play "Landscape of the Body" (1977), that making ourselves up as we go along is the only social contract we can honor in our show-biz-blitzed, invented, godless world.

The Signature Theatre Company's uneven yet fascinating revival of "Landscape of the Body" (at the Peter Norton Space) opens with Betty Yearn (Lili Taylor) sitting on the deck of a ferry, heading to Nantucket. Dressed in a trenchcoat and a bright-colored head scarf, Betty is writing notes and putting them in bottles, which she then drops overboard into the sea. She wants to tell the truth about her life, somehow, and she imagines that her messages will eventually reach someone she doesn't know. A man wearing a Groucho Marx-like disguise (Paul Sparks) approaches. To engage her in conversation, he points out the sights. "That's the Kennedy compound over there," he tells her. "That house is Teddy Kennedy's." But Betty has no interest in what this man has to say. And, besides, she knows who he is under his ridiculous disguise: Captain Marvin Holahan, the cigarette-smoking, noir-talking detective who wants to nail her for the murder of her teen-age son, Bert (the fine Stephen Scott Scarpulla). Whipping off his disguise, Holahan carries us, in a flashback, to an interrogation room, where his questioning reveals that Betty is no Whitman's Sampler of a mom. She has appeared in a number of porno flicks. But has she? Her dead sister, Rosalie (Sherie Rene Scott), enters the room. Dressed in white and looking like a vision, she stares out at the audience and begins to sing about her life, and her sister's life, with the haunted force of memory. Thus Guare establishes his theme: the melody of existence, performed with the delusional drive of characters from a dime-store novel.

The play jumps through time. Further flashbacks show Betty and Bert coming to New York to try to take Rosalie to Maine, where she and Betty grew up and where life was simpler. In Manhattan, Rosalie, an aspiring performer, has become dangerously entangled with a dress-wearing hustler named Raulito (the superb Bernard White). But, after Rosalie is killed by a collision with a cyclist on Hudson Street, Betty feels compelled to take over and live her sister's life. She wants to redeem Rosalie's soiled ghost—either that or end up just like her. Using nearly every form available to him—vaudeville sketches, standup comedy, cabaret, straight drama, melodrama, and cheesy movie conventions—Guare mines the idea of the double, and of the doubleness that death forces on us: when a loved one dies, we die, too. The drama that runs through the show's funny bits isn't funny at all. Despite her travails, Rosalie was an artist. Betty isn't. But she still wants to express something of herself, even if only through messages in a bottle.

In Taylor and Scott, the play's prolific director, Michael Greif, has chosen two larger-than-life, exceptionally intelligent, Fosse-like actresses—which is appropriate, considering that this is Guare's most Fosse-like play. (You could argue that "Landscape," with its mixture of forms and its examination of the nature of death and of performance, influenced Fosse's epic memory film "All That Jazz.") With their beautifully pronounced, unconventional features and their burning desire to be the best, both Taylor and Scott work close to the edge of their characters' respective realities. Scott, with her long legs and her Dorothy McGuire stare, will remind you of the first woman you ever fell in love with—you can smell the stardust and the Jean Naté whenever she enters or exits the stage. Taylor exposes us to her various lost selves with a similar poeticism. And both actresses succeed, spectacularly, in making us see what Guare sees in these women: the brutal truth behind the gossamer, the underpinnings of the actor's soul. ♦

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MUSICAL EVENTS

# BIRTH

*A new opera from the Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho.*

BY ALEX ROSS

Kaija Saariaho, whose new opera, "Adriana Mater," had its première in Paris earlier this month, once said that she likes to explore the boundary between music and noise. Many of her large-scale works, "Adriana" included, begin with a great, heaving expanse of intermingled timbres, like a landscape turned molten, or an ocean boiling. Instruments cry out at high or low extremes; pitches are bent or broken apart; violins are bowed with such intensity that they groan; flutes are blown until they emit an asthmatic rasp. It's the kind of sound that boxes the ears and maxes out the brain; information pours in on all frequencies. But Saariaho is something other than a sonic terrorist out to shock whatever remains of the bourgeoisie. She makes her eruptions of noise seem like natural phenomena, the aftermath of some seismic break. Shapes emerge from the chaos, and the shapes begin to sing. The latter sections of her pieces often bring apparitions of rare, pure beauty—plain intervals that sound like harmony reborn, liminal melodies that disappear the moment they are heard. They are like the wildflowers that bloom in Death Valley, their colors intensified by the nothingness around them.

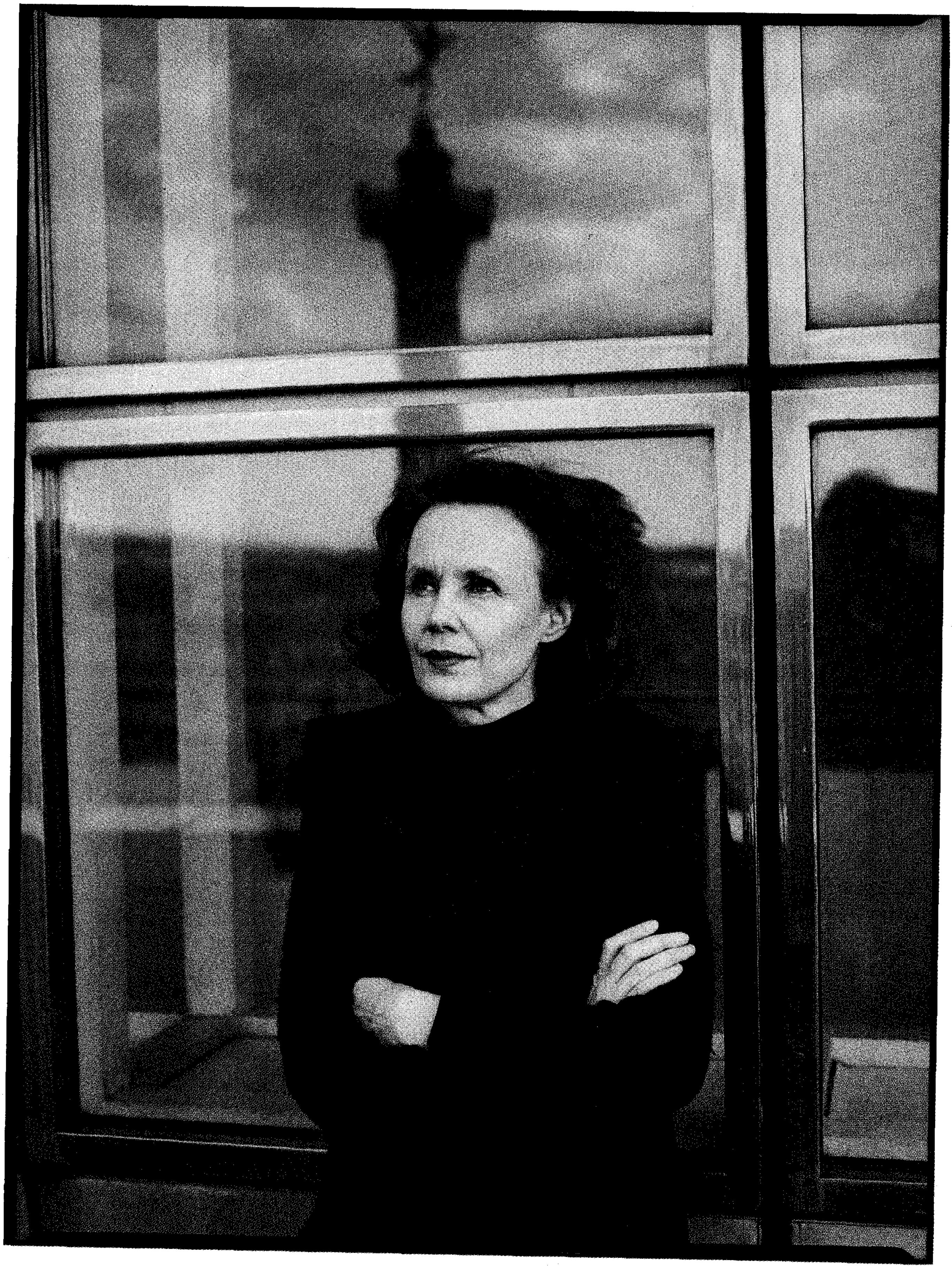
Saariaho, who is fifty-three, has had a fascinating career trajectory, moving from the hothouses of the European avant-garde into something like the cultural mainstream. She was part of a ridiculously gifted class of Finnish music students that included the composer Magnus Lindberg and the composer-conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen (who led the "Adriana" première). She has been living in Paris since 1982, and from the start her music has been marked by ideas that have been circulating in French music for several decades: the derivation of melody and harmony from overtones, and the blending of instrumental and electronic timbres. She has long been associated with IRCAM, the electronic-music institute that was founded by Pierre Boulez, in 1977. (New Yorkers will have a chance to hear IRCAM's gadgetry in a mini-festival at Columbia University on May 6th and 7th.)

Saariaho's chief French models were Tristan Murail and Gérard Grisey, who, in the nineteen-seventies, developed a compositional process that came to be called "spectralism." By way of computers, they analyzed the overtones that accompany any resonating tone—say, a low E on a trombone. They then tried to capture that spectrum of tone color in novel forms that unfolded in shimmering waves. The resulting music sounds exotic on first encounter, but its foundation in acoustical reality gives it a certain "rightness," in contrast to previous compositional systems, such as twelve-tone technique, which imposed alternate realities on unwilling audiences. After all, the lower end of the overtone series supplies the building blocks of Western music—the octave, the fourth, the fifth, the major third. Seminal spectralist works, such as Murail's orchestral piece "Gondwana" and Grisey's evening-length instrumental cycle "Les Espaces Acoustiques," have epiphanic moments in which grand harmonies coalesce from the ether—the same effects of emergence that are central to Saariaho's aesthetic.

Composers who have taken inspiration from spectralist methods—among them Saariaho, Julian Anderson, Georg Friedrich Haas, and the late Claude Vivier—aren't tune-happy populists by any means. But they have brought a new sensuousness to European music. In place of the spastic gesturing that was de rigueur during the Cold War era, their work often unfolds in meditative, deep-breathing lines. While spectralist music would hardly serve as the soundtrack to a yoga session, it does have the capacity to generate a state of eerie calm. In a way, it is the European counterpart to American minimalism, which, back in the nineteen-sixties, returned emphatically to musical ABCs. It was interesting that while Salonen was rehearsing "Adriana Mater" in Paris, his home orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, was mounting a festival of minimalist music. Perhaps a new lingua franca is emerging, one that reunites a fractured compositional scene. The title of Murail's "Gondwana," after all, suggests a vision of music as a single giant continent.

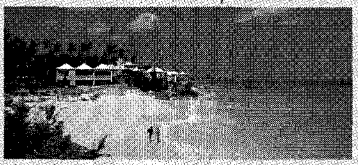
Saariaho never imagined herself an opera composer. But, after seeing Messiaen's monumental sacred opera "St. Francis of Assisi" at the Salzburg Festival in 1992, she realized that she could engage the genre as slow-moving ritual rather than as event-packed drama. Eight years later, her first opera, "L'Amour de Loin," or "The Distant Love," was unveiled at Salzburg. It is based on a libretto by the Lebanese novelist Amin Maalouf, who, like the composer, is a longtime Paris resident. The story has the simple power of an ancient tale, which it is: Jaufré, a twelfth-century troubadour, falls in love with the idea of a far-off Tripoli countess and, after a long, dread-filled journey, dies in her arms. Saariaho's music captures with magical immediacy the drastic emotions that swirl around this romance, which is different from standard operatic melodrama in that the action is largely psychological. There is a riveting DVD of a Finnish National Opera performance, with a beautifully restrained Peter Sellars production, roof-rattling orchestral sounds under Salonen's direction, and great lead performances by Dawn Upshaw, Monica Groop, and Gerald Finley. Saariaho's stroke of genius is to keep the melodic lines spare and direct amid the orchestral phantasmagoria; Debussy's "Pelléas et Mélisande" is her vocal model. After watching the DVD, you may find yourself writing a letter to your local opera house, pleading for a production. This one is addressed to Peter Gelb, Metropolitan Opera.

"Adriana Mater," which also has a Maalouf libretto and a production by Sellars, is at once a more political and a more personal piece. It is rooted in the composer's memories of her first pregnancy, during which she thought often about the person whose heart was beating next to her own and studied the sonogram for clues. She described that feeling to Maalouf, who added to it his own longstanding obsessions with the agonies of



*In Saariaho's music, eruptions of noise seem like the aftermath of some seismic break. Photograph by François-Marie Banier.*

a shade apart.



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modern identity, with the intertwining of religious fanaticism and political violence. He wove a modern fable about a woman named Adriana, who, amid the chaos of a modern regional war (in the Balkans, perhaps), is raped and impregnated by a fellow-villager. Seventeen years later, the child becomes an angry young man, and when he meets his father he has to decide whether he will exact vengeance. When, finally, he shies away from violence, Adriana says to him, "We have not been avenged, but we have been saved."

The story of Adriana has obvious contemporary resonances, suggesting how a nation at war can harm itself as much as it damages its enemies. The music begins with a typical Saariaho assault: an eight-note chord, marked *disperato*, blaring brightly and cruelly in the brass. Yet there's something different about Saariaho's use of the "noise" mode in this opera. It lacks the enveloping mystery that distinguishes "L'Amour de Loin." Instead, the dissonance feels more like the standard barrage that professionally anguished composers have been unleashing since the nineteen-fifties. It makes for a sullen first act, short on contrast. On the other hand, there may be a specific reason that Saariaho has chosen to employ this harsh and limited palette in setting out her scene. For centuries, male composers have been subjecting female characters to humiliation and death onstage. It is different, somehow, when a woman composer enacts the same ritual; there is no element of fantasy about the violence, as there is even in such a complexly compassionate work as Berg's "Lulu."

In the second act, a deeper agenda comes to the fore, which has little to do with war, the Balkans, the Middle East, or other present-day contexts. It has to do with the core idea of the opera: Saariaho's experience of the pain and beauty of birth. Ultimately, the outer events of the story seem like an elaborate metaphor for a more everyday but no less extraordinary story of becoming a mother in a hostile world. When, at the end, Adriana rests her head on her son's shoulder, and simple intervals sound in the orchestra (notably the elemental open fifth, as in Grisey's masterpiece "Transitoires"), the feeling of resolution is immense. It is a stupendous ending, all the more so for taking the audience out of darkness into light.

The première production, at the Bastille Opera, was involving, but not at the level of "L'Amour de Loin." George Tsypin's sets underused the vast spread of the Bastille's stage; an array of walls, huts, and domes made for a frustratingly limited stage picture. James Ingalls's lighting effects were uncharacteristically predictable (blood-red for violence, etc.). Sellars got urgent performances from the singers, but his usual leaps of dramatic imagination were absent. Patricia Bardon sang the role of Adriana with a sometimes edgy voice but with emotional vitality; Stephen Milling gave a gruff, black-voiced presence to the rapist, Tsargo; Solveig Kringelborn was luminous as Adriana's sister, Refka; Gordon Gietz sang passionately and accurately as young Yonas. Unfortunately, the sound design, by IRCAM technicians, periodically swallowed up the voices; the Bastille is not made for electronic effects. Despite Salonen's dynamic conducting, the greatness of the opera was more sensed than heard. Still, the audience rewarded Saariaho with a tumultuous ovation.

The première of "Adriana Mater" was delayed for several days by one of the various strikes that have recently immobilized France. While waiting, I went to the Théâtre du Châtelet to see Wagner's "Die Walküre," in a Robert Wilson production, with Christoph Eschenbach conducting; Wilson's staging of the complete "Ring" has been running at the Châtelet this season. As in Wilson's all-blue version of "Lohengrin," which returns to the Met this week, the working to death of a tiny handful of motifs, poses, and color schemes (hint: it wasn't magenta) makes for a long night. Endrik Wottrich, Petra-Maria Schnitzer, Linda Watson, and Jukka Rasilainen were in varying degrees inadequate to the roles of Siegmund, Sieglinde, Brünnhilde, and Wotan. It's never good news when Fricka, Wotan's querulous wife, becomes the heroine, but Mihoko Fujimura's performance dominated the stage, not only because her voice is lustrous in tone and precise in diction but because her stylized attitudes of rage and rectitude gave life to the pseudo-Kabuki mannerisms of Wilson's production. It somehow seemed appropriate that in the vicinity of "Adriana Mater," a new feminist masterpiece, the clearest theme in "Die Walküre" was that a woman had had enough of her husband's lies. ♦

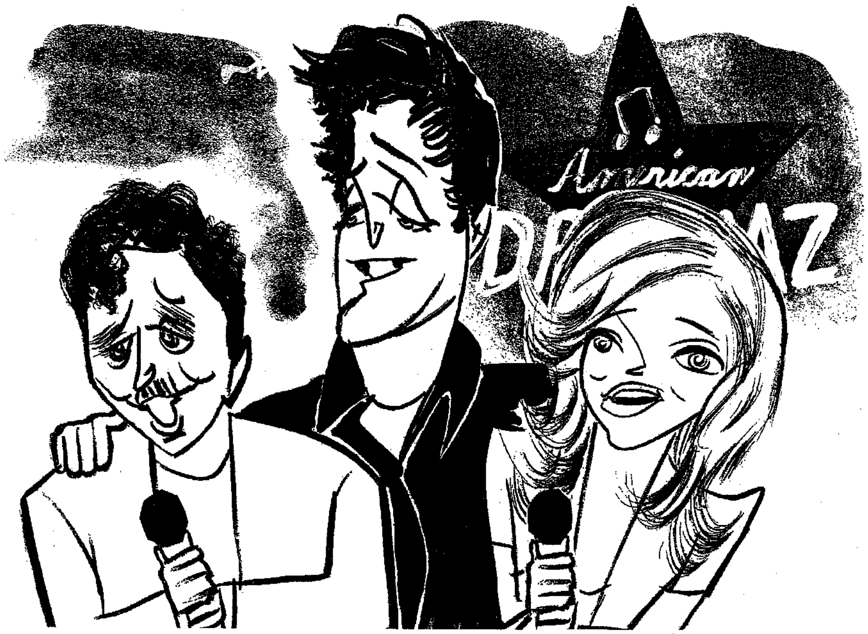
## THE CURRENT CINEMA

# GAME PLAYING

*"American Dreamz" and "I Am a Sex Addict."*

### BY ANTHONY LANE

The latest film from the director Paul Weitz, "American Dreamz," reunites him with Hugh Grant, who starred for him in "About a Boy" (2002). This new project should be called "About a Bastard," for it requires Grant to play an Englishman, Martin Tweed, from whom all trace of virtue appears to have been surgically extracted. Tweed hosts a top-ranking TV show, "American Dreamz," made in Los Angeles, in which members of the public, ranging from the chronically ungifted to the momentarily bearable, sing their little hearts out in the quest for fame.



*Sam Golzari, Hugh Grant, and Mandy Moore in Paul Weitz's new movie.*

One such hopeful is Sally Kendoo (Mandy Moore), whose own little heart is, to paraphrase Captain Renault in "Casablanca," her least vulnerable spot. Among the other contenders are an Orthodox cantor turned rapper, of whom we see not nearly enough, and a sweet, stumblebum Arab (the film is too chicken to specify his country of origin) by the name of Omer (Sam Golzari), who just happens to have been trained, somewhat reluctantly, as a terrorist. When news comes that the President of the United States (Dennis Quaid) has agreed to be a guest judge on the program's final round, Omer is sent into action by a sleeper cell and ordered to martyr himself for the cause—the downside being that his only cause is show tunes.

Nobody could accuse Weitz of skimping on plot, or of reining in his exposure of a disease—what you might call metastatic reality denial, spreading from coast to coast—that he has evidently diagnosed in every limb of national life. That, I imagine, is why the resulting movie proves so physically horrid to behold. One way to chasten the skin-deep, certainly, is to leave your characters at the mercy of the director of photography and the makeup artist; how else to account for the orangey glow that suffuses the brow and cheeks of Mandy Moore, suggesting not so much an hour on the sunbed as a yearlong diet of carrots? As for the grainy features of Hugh Grant, he

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seems to have been weathered for his role by an old-fashioned saddler—a kinder treatment than that meted out to Dennis Quaid, who sports the clenched and stuffed demeanor that usually follows an injection of embalming fluid. Add the hot beams of the television studio, as unforgiving as searchlights on a prison watchtower, and the portrait of a culture that has been drained of natural energy by a fixation with surface detail is complete.

As played by Quaid, the President is a floundering buffoon, cut adrift from the electorate and reliant, with no more than a twinge of unease, on his hectoring chief of staff (Willem Dafoe), who feeds him lines for public declamation through an earpiece. This is just a wild guess, but are we meant to be reminded of a real President? If so, it feels too easy, almost as simplistic in its sneering as the simplemindedness that it affects to despise; "American Dreamz" will be music to the ears of many Bush-bashers, but the best satire should box everybody's ears. Just to make matters more peculiar, there is a squirt of sentimental populism, with the President sensing the error of his ways and struggling, through honesty and self-education, to square himself with the truth about the Middle East. He even makes a noble effort to halt the detonation of Omer's bomb. Film historians might be touched to see that, however scathing a modern director yearns to be, the spirit of Frank Capra will still find a way in, but audiences, I suspect, will walk away confused. What kind of movie are they being asked to watch? Is it a farce, or a call to arms? And, given the scant attention that it pays to Tweed's hit show, and to the mechanics of how a talent program is constructed, is Weitz really interested in TV, or is he merely airing his dislike?

Any attempt to defend "American Dreamz" for its political venom, or for the surfeit of its surreal conceits, is doomed to founder on a single, obstructive fact: this picture ain't funny. I winced three times, and gave a couple of short laughs, but that was it. (The look of dawning disgust on Tweed's face as the President's earpiece pops out is especially good, like something out of a medieval morality play: the devil regarding the fool.) The problem is the old one of smugness: how do you set yourself up in judgment without coming across as superior? To be fair, better filmmakers than Weitz have stubbed their toes on this conundrum. Worshippers of "Dr. Strangelove," for instance, tend to fight shy of the awkwardness that comes from seeing an ambitious comedy created by a humorless artist. Most of the fun in that movie springs not from Kubrick but from Peter Sellers; the rest of it is cold and cavernous grandeur, overlaid by a studentish conviction that the world is run by lonely, nervous madmen. Quite unlike a film set, of course. Or a TV studio.

At its climax, "American Dreamz" hurries into chaos, not that we mind how it ends. There have been so many false notes in the development of the main characters that their fates can scarcely concern us. Why bother to present Martin Tweed as a sabre-toothed rogue and then ask us to believe that he would keep his hands off Sally—whom he chivalrously calls "a dirty little bitch"—until the last minute? The actors who emerge with the most credit are those portraying Arabs: Sam Golzari, who captures the sweat and stammer of the eternal amateur, and Tony Yalda, who plays Iqbal, Omer's cousin and latterly his manager, and who seems to have decided that the neatest way to carve through the mixed messages of "American Dreamz" is to camp it up—hair-tossing, his own disco glitter ball, the works. Until I saw Iqbal, I never knew that it was possible to flounce while sitting down. It takes so little daring or originality to satirize a cheesy talent show; but to take that satire and act as if it *were* a cheesy talent show—now, that takes nerve. Ladies and gentlemen, our winner.

There is one overriding reason to see "I Am a Sex Addict," and it has nothing to do with sex. That sounds unlikely, given that the whole film is about the extent to which sex can, like dieting or accountancy, consume your waking life and feed your dreams. As with the 2003 "Tarnation," the movie is an auto-documentary, a genre of which we will be seeing a lot more—thanks to the advances in digital technology—as the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted, and the downright narcissistic venture to bare their lives on film. The discomfort provoked by "Tarnation," though,

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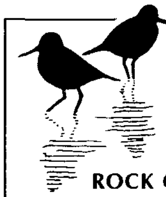

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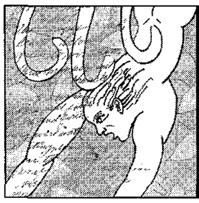

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as it forcibly poked our noses into a clear case of mental damage, has no echo here. The news that somebody gets a kick out of visiting prostitutes, and that he finds it hard to kick the kick, is unlikely to distress the average viewer, who will rightly regard the addiction as a mixture of boastfulness, rueful whine, and joke.

The film stars Caveh Zahedi, a filmmaker who is based in San Francisco—he would make a great contestant on "American Dreamz"—as Caveh Zahedi, who is also the writer, director, producer, co-editor, and subject. Prostitutes, my ass: with this grade of self-attention, I think we know what this guy's favorite turn-on has to be. Much of the time, he stands before the camera and recites the litany of his obsessions. This takes a familiar form, with an unquenchable erotic thirst replacing an adolescent belief that the love of his life was always waiting around the next bend. Zahedi shuffles a few scraps of home-movie footage, tape recordings, and stills, but he also employs actresses to play the women who strayed onto his path. This could have been the most manipulative tactic in the film, but the ease with which he allows the performers to step out of character is, if not gentlemanly, at least alive to the irony of the task. Even Zahedi, a connoisseur of the naughty, seems taken aback when the ravishing French actress hired to play his first wife, Caroline, is found to be moonlighting as a porn star. What if "I Am a Sex Addict" turns out to be the break that enables her to keep her clothes on and cross over into the mainstream? How much irony can we take?

As for the overriding reason to see the film, that's easy. Lighten Zahedi's complexion, stuff him in a fright wig, and this fellow would be a ringer for Harpo Marx. The mortal frame both weedy and bendy, the smile that hovers between the beatific and the mad, the wandering gaze of the bulging eyes: every box is ticked, and the movie functions not merely as a nostalgic gesture to "Duck Soup"—Zahedi could don a nightcap and join the mirror scene, no questions asked—but as a psychosexual gloss on Harpo's perennial misconduct. That way he had of trailing women in a thoughtless reverie, as if pulled by an invisible leash, is identical to Zahedi's stroll down hooker-lined streets. In both cases, the grown man seems all the more creepy for drifting along with the gaiety of a child, as if trying to reclaim some innocence for his desires. Nonetheless, it's hard to disapprove of Zahedi, who is far more of a pushover, or a patsy, than the fierce and knowing women he meets, and one of his confessional voice-overs will stay with me forever: "Caroline offered to give me yet another blow job, but I'd recently gotten a job as a film critic, and I didn't want to be late for my first screening." *That* old excuse. ♦

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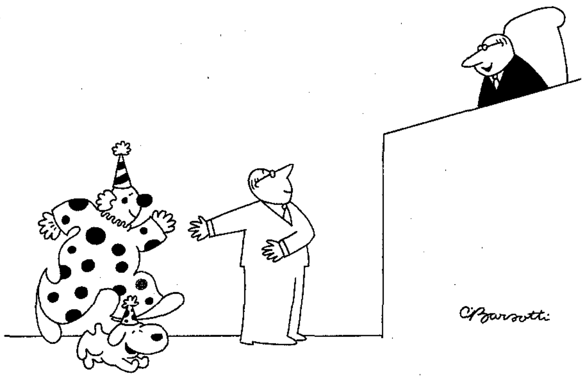
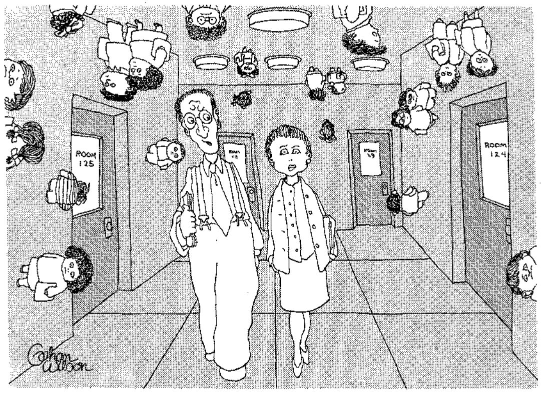


*"How many surprise witnesses do you have in that little car?"*
John Sonntag, Pacific Palisades, Calif.



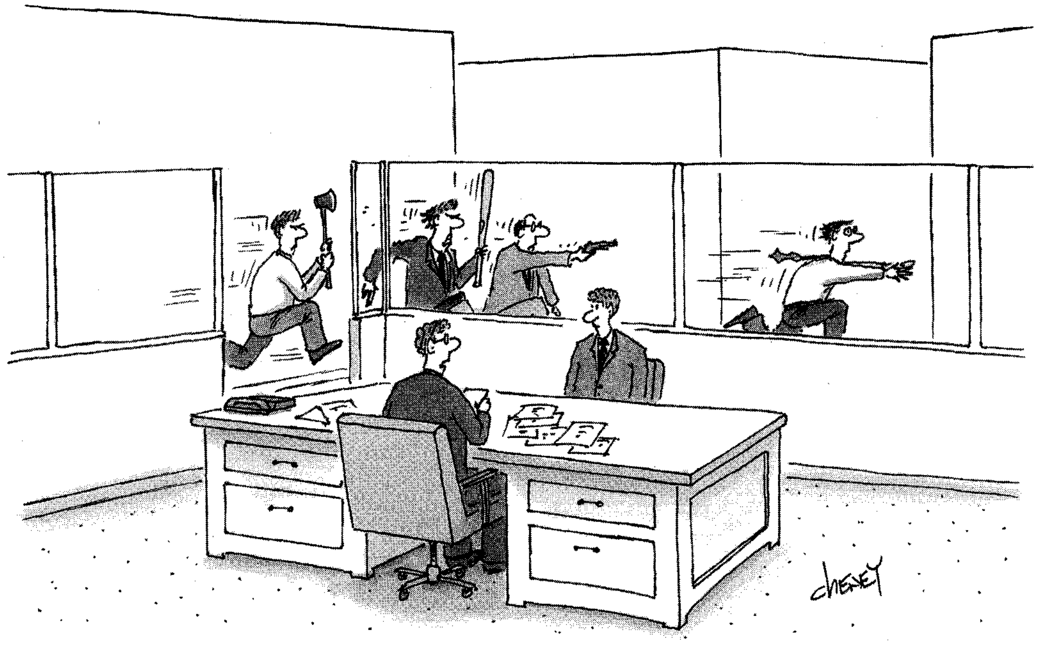
## THE FINALISTS

*"Back in my day, kids had a little respect for the law of gravity."*
Thomas Buell, Jr., Pittsburgh, Pa.

*"Unfortunately, at this age they don't carry much pocket change."*
Pete Critelli, Red Lodge, Mont.

*"I told you those humane traps never really work."*
Richard Marcus, Portland, Ore.

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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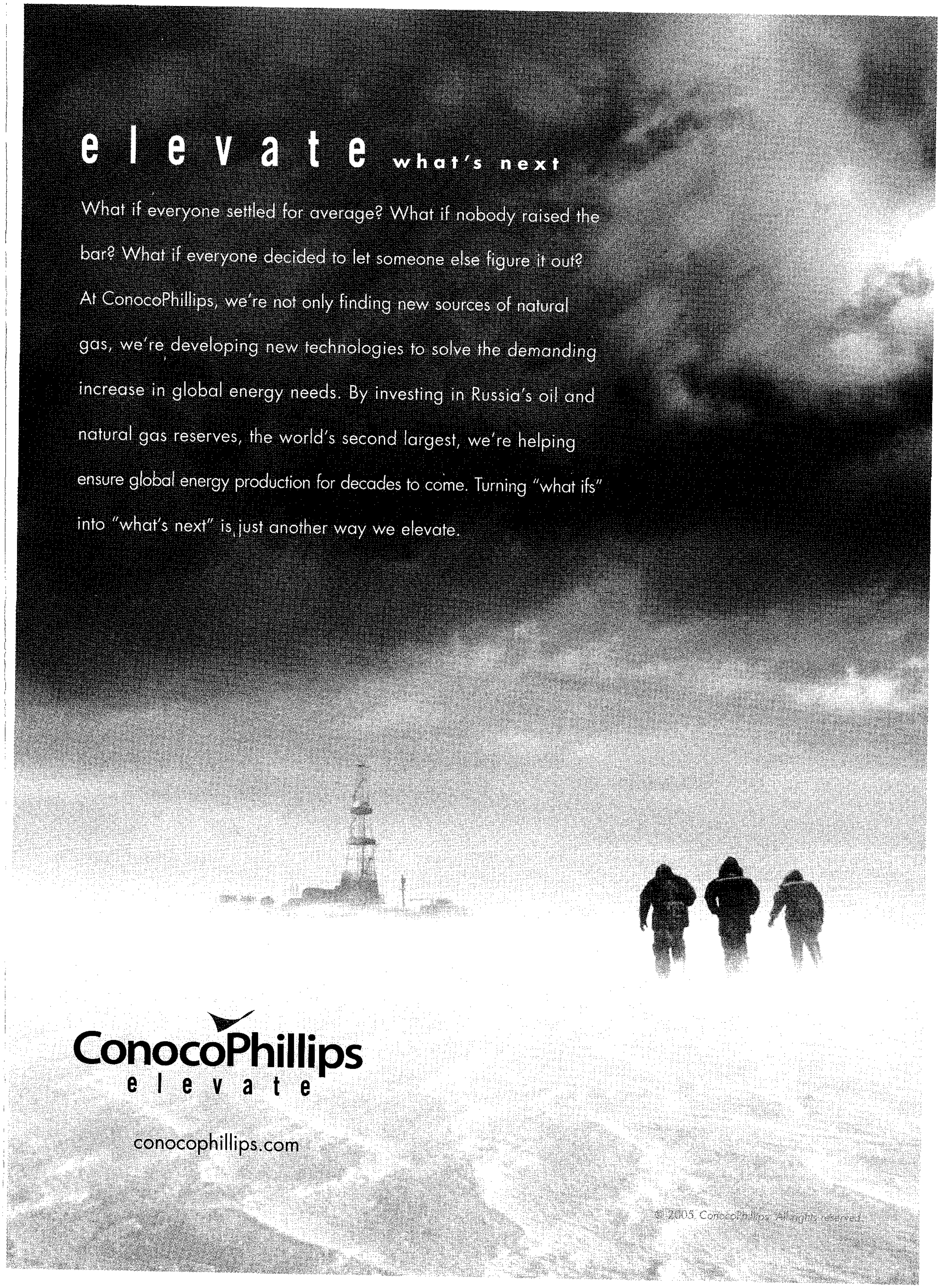

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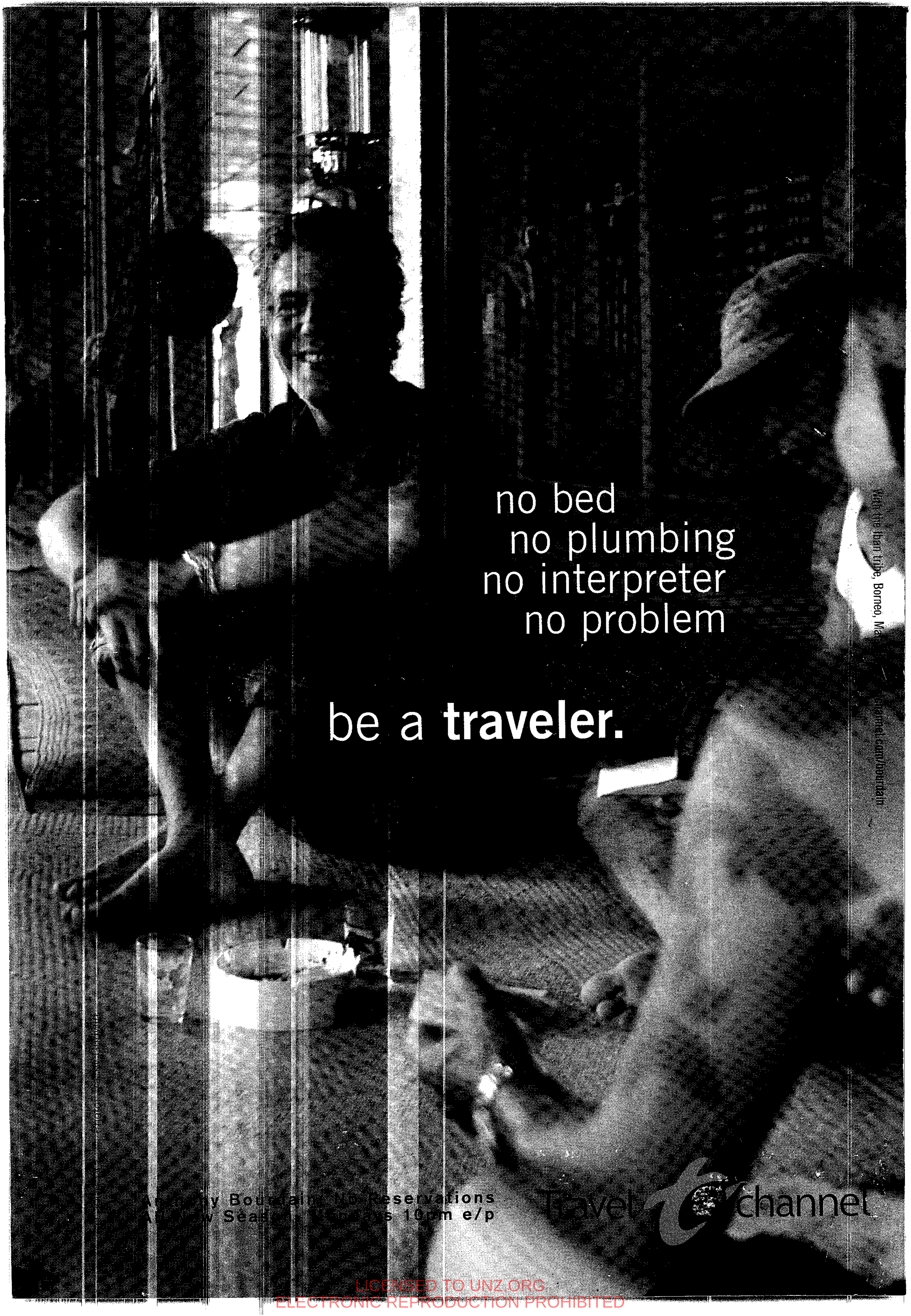

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